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MAKING LIGHT OF CHRIST AND SALVATION,

TOO OFT THE ISSUE OF GOSPEL INVITATIONS :

A CALL TO THE UNCONVERTED

TO TURN AND LIVE :

54 **THE LAST WORK OF A BELIEVER;**

/// **HIS PASSING PRAYER, RECOMMENDING HIS DEPARTING SPIRIT TO CHRIST,
TO BE RECEIVED BY HIM :**

**OF THE
SHEDDING ABROAD OF GOD'S LOVE**

ON THE HEART BY THE HOLY GHOST :

BY

RICHARD BAXTER

WITH AN ESSAY

ON HIS LIFE, MINISTRY, AND THEOLOGY,

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OF THE WORLD," &c.**

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AN ESSAY

ON

BAXTER'S LIFE, MINISTRY, AND THEOLOGY.

It is a remark of Dr Wilkins, Bishop of Chester, that "it was enough for one age to produce such a man as Richard Baxter." The age which had the honour of producing this holy and great man, was the age of the Commonwealth, the age of Nonconformity. "Never did our England, since she first emerged from the ocean, rise so high above surrounding nations. The rivalry of Holland, the pride of Spain, the insolence of France, were thrust back by one finger each; yet those countries were more powerful than they had ever been. The sword of Cromwell was preceded by the mace of Milton, by that man which, when Oliver had rendered his account, opened to our contemplation the garden-gate of Paradise. And there were some around not unworthy to enter with him. In the compass of sixteen centuries, you will not number on the whole earth so many wise and admirable men, as you could have found united in that single day, when England shewed her true magnitude, and solved the question, WHICH IS MOST, ONE OR A MILLION? There were giants in those days; but giants who feared God, and not who fought against him."*

BAXTER was one of the numerous giants of the Commonwealth. He was to its theology what CROMWELL was to its politics,—what MILTON was to its liberties,—and what OWEN was to its non-conformity.

This distinguished man was remarkable in every form of his character, and in all those combinations of qualities which fitted him for extensive usefulness, as an eminent saint, a laborious pastor, and a profound divine. The series of works presented to the public in the LIBRARY of PURITAN DIVINES, are intended to interest the private Christian, the faithful Minister, and the theological Student. To meet these cases, this Essay is arranged to embrace

* W. Savage Landon's IMAGINARY CONVERSATIONS, in the conversation between MARVEL and PARKER.

Baxter's Life, Baxter's Ministry, and Baxter's Theology, in the hope that it will succeed in making Baxter known to the Million.

CHAPTER I.

BAXTER'S LIFE.

RICHARD BAXTER was born November 12, 1615, at Rowton, the house of his maternal grandfather, in High Ercall, a rural village, not far from the foot of the Wrekin, in Shropshire. His parents were connected with the gentry of the county; but his father had squandered much of his estate by the habits of gambling, to which he was addicted in his youth. About the time of the birth of Richard, a deep religious seriousness pervaded the character of his father, which was occasioned by reading the Scriptures in private.

Baxter spent the first ten years of his life at Rowton, under the care of his grandfather; but the father had frequent interviews with his child, and the first religious impressions which his young heart received, were produced by the holy character and serious conversations of his father. Under this influence the boy became so habitually devout and serious, that, even at this early age, as Dr BATES mentions in his funeral sermon for him, he would reprove the improper conduct of other children, "to the astonishment of those who heard him."

The youthful piety of Richard Baxter was unfolded in the midst of elements calculated to quench and destroy it. He was born in a district where the religion of the Book of Sports was in the highest popularity. The clergy of the district were, almost universally, mere readers of prayers, and no preachers. It is on this account that they were called reading curates, reading vicars, &c. In addition to their total incapacity for preaching, they were, for the most part, poor, ignorant, immoral, and even dissolute men. The result was, that the villagers and peasants were sunk in vice and irreligion, and spent the greater part of the Sabbath in dancing round the Maypole, and in other gambols, which the Book of Sports recommended and enjoined as proper exercises for the Lord's day. Baxter, at so tender an age, was likely to be influenced by the corrupting scenes around him; and, in subsequent life, he deeply laments that, "during his boyhood, he became addicted to the sins of disobedience to parents, lying, stealing fruit, &c.—sins which afterwards greatly disturbed his conscience, and which he found great difficulty in mastering.

In such a district, and in such circumstances, the education of the future Schoolman of English Theology was likely to be neglected. His first ten years were spent among the peasants of High Ercall, and all the education which he received, from the age of six to ten, was under the training of the four successive curates of the parish, of whom the two ablest were drunkards, even to beggary. At the age of ten, he was removed from Rowton to the house of his father, at Eaton Constantine, a village reposing on the left bank of the Severn, about five miles below Shrewsbury. Here he was placed under the instruction of the curate, a notorious drunkard, who had been a lawyer's clerk, who was now reading prayers under forged orders, and who, in Baxter's time, preached only once, and was then drunk. From this wretched teacher, in pretended holy orders, he was transferred to the care of a man of acknowledged abilities, "who," says Baxter, "loved me much, and who expected to be made a bishop." This tutor grievously neglected his charge, for, in the course of two years, he never gave his pupil one hour's actual instruction, but "devoted his time to attacks on the Puritans." His next tutor was Mr Owen of Wroxeter, the head-master of the free school of that place. Here Baxter made considerable attainments in the Latin Classics, but not much progress in Greek.

In all these places of education, Baxter had to depend entirely upon his own diligence, ambition, and judgment. His proficiency at Wroxeter was so satisfactory to Mr Owen, that he was now deemed fully prepared for the University of Oxford, for which he was intended; but instead of sending the youth to Oxford, Mr Owen recommended him to go to Ludlow, to be under the tuition of Mr Wickstead, the chaplain of the council, who was allowed to have one pupil. He who has once seen Ludlow Castle, will fondly remember it as the romantic centre of one of the sweetest landscapes in England, and as the august seat of many historical recollections. Here Baxter entered as a pupil,—here, some three or four years afterwards, Milton presented his immortal "Comus" for the first time,—and here, some thirty years afterwards, Butler wrote the first part of his *Hudibras*. In Ludlow Castle, however, as well as elsewhere, Baxter's education was neglected by his tutor; and all the benefit which the youth received, he derived himself from the enjoyment of abundance of time, and plenty of books. His own indomitable mind did all the rest, in his "pursuit of knowledge under difficulties."

In the history of Baxter's life, Ludlow is celebrated for two events which had great influence in the formation of his religious character: and these were his temptations to become a gambler, and the

religious apostacy of his most intimate friend. The first game he ever played in his life, he played with the best gamester in the Castle. It was soon perceived that, he must inevitably lose the game, unless he obtained one particular cast of the dice each time in succession. The dice gave that particular cast each time, and he won the game. His astonishing success induced him to believe that the devil had managed the dice for the purpose of making a gamester of him. He therefore returned the money to his antagonist, and determined never to play another game. The apostacy of his young friend was more dangerous to him than the temptation to gambling. His friend was a religious and a very devotional young man. They were very much attached to each other, and were constantly studying together. He was the first that Baxter had ever heard pray extempore, and it was from him that Baxter himself acquired the gift and habit. This youth became a reviler of all religion, and even scoffed at Baxter's devotional habits. From the contagion of his influence Baxter was preserved, partly by his own deep religious convictions at that time, and partly by his removal from Ludlow Castle to Eaton Constantine.

When he returned to the house of his father he was fifteen years of age. He was one day rummaging among the books of his father, and discovered an old tattered book, which a poor cottager in the neighbourhood had lent him. Young Baxter, fresh from the scenes and recollections of Ludlow Castle, read this book very closely, and with great "searchings of heart;" and the reading produced in his mind decided convictions of the evil of sin. It will be interesting to know what book that was which gave the decisive turn to Baxter's mind. That tattered old book was BUNNY's "Booke of Christian Exercise appertaining to Resolution." Its name in common use was "BUNNY's Resolution." The real author of it was PARSONS, the famous English Jesuit. The original was written on purely popish principles; but it was corrected and improved by EDMUND BUNNY, a thorough old Puritan, who was Rector of Bolton Percy, and who, after a life of apostolic labours, died in 1617.

"BUNNY's Resolution" deals much and vigorously with conscience, and rouses every man to the obligation of "resolving ourselves to become Christians indeed." It is probable that this work gave to Baxter's mind that awakening tone, and that eloquent energy, which tell so mightily in his "Call to the Unconverted." The Jesuit, in composing this work, never thought that it would produce the author of "The Certainty of Christianity without Popery." BUNNY's Resolution was useful to Baxter, only so far as it awakened his mind, and directed him to caution, prayer, and firmness: it neither led him to Christ, nor brought him to the

guidance and aid of the Holy Spirit, and, therefore, it gave him no "joy and peace in believing." This was reserved for another, and a very different work: this honour was for Dr SIBBS' Bruised Reed. This admirable little work brought him and his resolutions to the Saviour, and melted his heart into devotion. If BUNNY'S Resolution strung Baxter's harp, it was Sibbs' Bruised Reed that tuned it to the love of Christ.

These were the circumstances in which Baxter was making arrangements for studying theology. In these he was interrupted by his being requested to superintend the school at Wroxeter, on account of the illness of his old tutor Mr Owen, and then by his own bodily infirmities. After superintending the Wroxeter school for three months, he placed himself under the care of the Rev. Francis Garbett, of the same village, that he might study theology as a science. He had scarcely been a month in the study of logic, before he was attacked with a harassing cough, spitting of blood, and many other symptoms of consumption, which continued to afflict him, almost incessantly, for two years. This affliction checked his intellectual studies, but it gave a powerful and an onward impulse to his religious affections; it excited him to a closer examination of his motives for entering the ministry, and it associated all his future plans and present movements with eternity. He already began to feel as a dying man among dying men. In this frame of mind, he found EZEKIEL CULVERWELL'S "Treatise of Faith," a great help and a delightful solace. It is reported of him that, in the twilight of every evening, at that interval in which it was too dark for him to read, and not dark enough to light his lamp, he employed his mind regularly in thinking of heaven. This will account for the sweetness and power with which at a subsequent period he wrote about "The Saints' Everlasting Rest;" the reading of which now is like conversing in "the gate of heaven."

The first month of his studies under Mr GARBETT had been given to logic; but after this affliction, he resolved to devote himself entirely, and almost exclusively, to theology, and that with a special and direct view to the information and the spiritual furniture of his own soul. In his theological curriculum, he studied first practical theology as exhibited in the best works of our English divines. In learning systematic theology, he was obliged to have recourse to the works of foreign divines; because, unless PERKINS'S Golden Chain be regarded as a systematic work, the English language did not at this period possess a Body of Divinity.

Wroxeter is to be held in remembrance as the place, in which Baxter finished his course of education preparatory to his entering on his ministerial work. In that important process he greatly needed

an intelligent guide, who would have directed him to the best course of theological reading, and to the best methods of study: but instead of having such guidance, he was left much to himself, and was almost entirely his own teacher. Had he had the advantages of a regular curriculum at a college or university, his knowledge would have been better arranged and more symmetrical, though, perhaps, not so various and discursive. In the absence of such salutary discipline and wholesome aid, his predilections and taste led him to plunge himself into the thick forests of metaphysical theology. In dialectics he became a consummate Aristotelian. The ecclesiastical fathers came to him as if they were brethren; Aquinas, as a familiar spirit; Anselm, as a fellow student; and Duns Scotus, as a pleasant companion. His success in these kinds of studies was so great and thorough, that, for acuteness in definitions, for subtlety in distinctions, and for masterly adroitness in disputation and logomachy, he deserved to be called the last of the Schoolmen. To all theologians, who have made any acquaintance with scholastic divinity, it is a pleasing marvel that, amid all its jargon Latin and its dry speculations, Baxter's mind and heart were kept in all their lively freshness and healthy glow. On one occasion their ponderous tomes seriously endangered his life, as they fell from shelves under which he was reposing. He recounts his deliverance as a singular interposition of Providence. "As I sat in my study, the weight of my greatest folio books brake down threes or four of the highest shelves, when I sat close under them, and they fell down on every side of me, and not one of them hit me, save one upon my arm; whereas the place, the weight, and the greatness of the books was such, and my head just under them, that it is a wonder they had not beaten out my brains." It is quite as great a wonder, that their weighty and crabbed lore did not wither and shrivel the energies of his capacious heart. Profound studies in metaphysics tend generally to freeze the religious affections of the student, but it is evident that they did not damp the ardour of Baxter's devotion. Even while threading the labyrinths and "wondrous mazes" of scholastic theology, he was "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Hear his own account, and his own estimate of his studies, as given in a letter to the bigotted and partial Anthony Wood, who wished to know whether he was an alumnus of Oxford. "As to myself," says Baxter, "my faults are no disgrace to any university, for I was of none; I have little but what I had out of books, and inconsiderable helps of country tutors. Weakness and pain helped me to study how to *die*; that set me on studying how to *live*; and that on studying the doctrine from which I fetch my motives and comforts. Beginning with necessities, I proceeded by degrees; and now I am going to see that for which I have lived and studied."

When Baxter was giving himself a theological education at Wroxeter, his prospects of usefulness in the ministry were clouded by his diseased constitution. He was now eighteen years of age, and his liveliest hopes were blighted. His former tutor at Ludlow Castle advised him to try his fortune at court, "as being the only rising way." For, at this period, Charles I. had but lately ascended the throne. Many circumstances seconded this recommendation. His parents had never been very cordial in his wishes to enter the ministry. They had great confidence in the opinion of Mr Wickstead; and he had great interest with Sir Henry Herbert, who was Master of the Revels. Baxter came to London and spent a month at court, but it was a month of disgust and revulsion. He says, "I had quickly enough of the court; when I saw a stage-play instead of a sermon on the Lord's days in the afternoon, and saw what course was there in fashion, and heard little preaching but what was, as to one part, against the Puritans, I was glad to be gone."

The illness of his mother supplied him with a good excuse for quitting Whitehall and retiring to Shropshire. He left London about Christmas 1633, during a severe frost. While travelling on horseback through a heavy and memorable snow-storm, he met, in a narrow part of the road, a loaded waggon, which he could pass only by riding on the side of a bank. In spurring his horse up this bank, the animal fell, the girths broke, and Baxter was thrown immediately before the wheel. At this critical juncture the horses stopped suddenly, unaccountably, but providentially, and his life was saved. The preservation of his life, in so remarkable a manner, deeply affected him. Under the influence of this fresh interference of God in his behalf, he reached his home, where he found his mother in such agonies of pain that her groans filled the whole house. She languished through the spring, and died on May 10, 1634. At the grave of his mother, and being rescued so wonderfully from his own grave, his mind was awakened to fresh and resolved thoughts about the ministry; and, in three or four years more, he entered the church as a Conformist, though no Episcopalian.

In 1638 he was appointed head master of the Free School which had been just established at Dudley, where he would have also opportunities for preaching. In the same year he was ordained at Worcester by Bishop Thornborough. After staying one year at Dudley, he removed to Bridgenorth, where the *Et Cætera* Oath made him a Nonconformist, and where, he says, he continued about a year and three quarters, having "liberty of preaching in troublous times."

The days of Baxter's sojourn in Bridgenorth might well be called "troublous times." In these times Laud was teaching popery to England, and manufacturing bonds of iniquity for Protestants;

Strafford was learning and practising servility to Charles, and sapping the liberties of his country; kings trembled on their thrones, and bishops were ill at ease on their benches; the immortal Hampden was disputing with his king about ship-money; Peter Smart was imprisoned twelve years for preaching against high church ceremonies; Dr Leighton, as much the minister of the freedom of truth, as his son was the minister of its love, had his ears cut off, and his nose slit, for writing his "Zion's Plea against Prelacy;" Prynne, the barrister, had similar cruelties inflicted on him for writing against plays and masquerades; the Scots were marching to England with their Covenant; the High Commission Court was practising the abominations of the Inquisition; the English were beginning to speak in honest Saxon, and bold tones, to their princes; Charles was become the most consummate and shameless hypocrite in England; the House of Commons appointed a committee to receive the complaints and petitions of the people against their ignorant and dissolute clergy, and the chairman published those complaints in his "One Century of Scandalous Ministers."

Such were the times about 1640, when Baxter left Bridgenorth to settle in Kidderminster, where he had been invited by the people to become their lecturer. This was his first settlement in that town, which lasted about two years; but they were two years of laborious preaching on his part, of great political agitations among the people, and of imminent danger to his life. The Royalist rabble were so malignant against his ministry, that his best friends recommended him to leave the place.

From Kidderminster he went to Gloucester, where he tarried one month. During his short stay, he witnessed, for the first time, one of the public disputations, which were sometimes held between the ministers and the Baptists, who were every where agitating the churches on the question of immersion,—a question on which, it is the humiliation and enervation of the Congregationalists, that they have not agreed to differ without separating from each other. On all other topics they can meet and associate with safety and peace. A Baptist and Independent are much like the powders of an acid and an alkali; they can mix together in the same phial, and in the same vessel, with perfect concord: but just drop a little water among them, and they are immediately in effervescence. So did Baxter find them at Gloucester, and so did he afterwards find them in his controversies with Mr Tombes of Bewdley.

When he had spent a month at Gloucester, his friends at Kidderminster thought he might return to them in safety; but, on his return, he found the town so much divided on the questions between the King and the Parliament, that he was obliged to quit it imme-

diately. Once more he was a wanderer, and he visited his old friend Mr Samuel Clark, at Alcester, where he preached on Sunday, October 23, 1642, amid the sounds of the cannon at Edgehill. On the next day he went to see the field of battle, and saw the two armies keeping the ground in sight of each other, and the space between them covered with the unburied bodies of the slain. From Alcester he went to Coventry to spend a month with his friend Mr Simon King, who was minister there. He expected that, in a month, Charles and the Parliament would have adjusted their differences and put an end to the civil war, but instead of ceasing, the war raged more and more furiously. The state of the country induced him to accept the invitation of the committee and governor of Coventry to stay with them and to preach to the soldiers. After a stay of one year in this city, he went to Shropshire for the purpose of releasing his father, who was a prisoner at Lilleshall. It was on this occasion that he joined Colonel Mytton, and Mr Hunt of Boreatton, at the garrison of Wem. In Shropshire, he was perpetually in the midst of tumults and skirmishes, and, therefore, at the end of two months, he returned to Coventry, and staid there another year. It was during this second stay that he signed the Scottish Covenant, and declared himself openly on the side of the Parliament. The first of these acts he always afterwards lamented; and for the second, he apologises with thirty-two reasons in his "Penitent Confessions."

Baxter was at Coventry when Cromwell fought and won the battle of Naseby; and, two days after the victory, he visited the field of battle, and passed a night in the Parliamentary camp, near Leicester. This visit opened his eyes to the real state of the army on the subject of civil and religious liberty. His new information deepened and darkened his prejudices against Cromwell. Yet some of the officers persuaded him to join the army, and he consented to become chaplain to Colonel Whalley's regiment.

As a military chaplain, his subsequent movements were regulated by the campaigns and marches of the regiment to which he was attached. Immediately on joining the army, he marched to Somerton, and was present at the battle of Langport, where, standing on the brow of a hill, he could survey the operations of both armies. As Goring's army began to flee before the Parliamentary forces under Fairfax, Baxter stood next to Major Harrison, and heard the gallant officer "with a loud voice break forth into the praise of God with fluent expressions, as if he had been in a rapture."

From Langport he accompanied the army to the siege of Bridgewater, which he saw taken by storm. He was again at the siege of Bristol, where, in about three days, he was taken ill of a fever, occa-

sioned by the plague which prevailed in the neighbourhood. He immediately quitted the camp, and rode to Bath, to be under the care of his physician, Dr Venner. In fourteen days the fever ended in a crisis, but it left him so emaciated and weak that "it was long," he says, "before I recovered the little strength which I had before." On his recovery, he returned to Bristol, and saw that city taken in four days, Major Bethell wounded and slain, and Prince Rupert routed with the loss of his "ordnance and arms." His next march was to Sherborne Castle, which, after a fortnight's siege, was taken by storm, "and that on a side which one would think could never have been that way taken." Cromwell, after his success at Basinghouse, near Basingstoke, resolved to pursue Lord Goring's troops to the west of England, where they had made themselves infamous for their flagrant impieties and barbarous outrages. In consequence of this movement of the army, Baxter was present at the siege of Exeter, where he continued about three weeks, and then left because his regiment was ordered to march against Oxford to keep that garrison in check till the army would return from Exeter. Colonel Whalley's regiment quartered in Buckinghamshire for about six weeks, when it besieged and took Banbury Castle. It was while quartering in this neighbourhood that Baxter maintained his famous disputation with Bethell's troopers at Agmondesham.

At the siege of Worcester, Baxter was again taken very ill, and he was urged by his friends to visit London for medical advice. On arriving in the metropolis, his physician sent him to Tunbridge Wells, where he received considerable benefit, and then returned through London to the army in Worcestershire. His quarters were at Rous Lench, the seat of Sir Thomas Rous, where he had never been before. Here Providence supplied him with a valuable friend, who continued for years to be of great use to him. This friend was Lady Lench, "a godly, grave, and understanding woman, who entertained me," says Baxter, "not as a soldier, but as a friend." From Worcestershire he went into Leicestershire, Staffordshire, and Derbyshire. At Melbourn, near Ashby-de-la-Zouch, his former diseases again afflicted him. It was now a cold and snowy season, and "the cold," he says, "together with other things coincident, set my nose bleeding. When I had bled a quart or two, I opened four veins, but that did no good. I used divers other remedies, for several days, to little purpose. * * * This so much weakened me, and altered my complexion, that my acquaintances who came to see me scarcely knew me."

This affliction was a turning point in the history of Baxter. It took him completely from all his schemes of opposing the Ironsides, just when he thought himself best prepared and furnished for the

enterprise ; and, by this means, he was separated for ever from the army. His illness at Melbourn detained him in his chamber and among strangers for three weeks. As soon as he gathered a little strength, he went to Kirby Mallory, and spent three weeks at the house of his friend Mr Nowell. When the news of his illness reached Rous Lench, Lady Rous sent her servant all the way to Leicestershire to bring him under her roof. " In great weakness," says Baxter, " thither I made shift to get, where I was entertained with the greatest care and tenderness, while I continued to use the means for my recovery ; and when I had been there a quarter of a year, I returned to Kidderminster."

He had now been ill about five months, but they were the most memorable months in his history. It was in this season of pains and medicines that he wrote his first works. His disputes in the army had prepared him to write his " Aphorisms of Justification ;" and his sanctified afflictions made him write of " The Saints' Everlasting Rest." The work which he commenced first was the " Saint's Rest ;" and it was while discussing the rewards, which should be conferred on the saints for their works of faith, that he was led to write his " Aphorisms." In speaking of the " Saint's Rest," he says, " Whilst I was in health, I had not the least thought of writing books, or of serving God in any more public way than preaching. But when I was weakened with great bleeding, and left solitary in my chamber at Sir John Cook's in Derbyshire, without any acquaintance but my servant about me, and was sentenced to death by the physicians, I began to contemplate more seriously on the everlasting rest which I apprehended myself to be just on the borders of ; and that my thoughts might not too much scatter in my meditation, I began to write something on that subject, intending but the quantity of a sermon or two (which is the cause that the beginning is, in brevity and style, disproportionable to the rest) ; but being continued long in weakness, where I had no books, nor no better employment, I followed it on till it was enlarged to the bulk in which it is published. The first three weeks I spent in it was at Mr Nowell's house at Kirby Mallory, in Leicestershire ; a quarter of a year more, at the seasons which so great weakness would allow, I bestowed on it at Sir Tho. Rous's house, at Rous Lench, in Worcestershire ; and I finished it shortly after at Kidderminster. The first and last parts were first done, being all that I intended for my own use ; and the second and third parts came afterwards in besides my first intention."

Myriads of saints will have to bless God for ever for having afflicted Baxter at Melbourn, and for having taught him, in the minister's house at Kirby, to write the " Saints' Rest." He wrote it

when he had no books by him but a Bible and a Concordance. It was the transcript of his own heart, and therefore he found that, of all his works, "it had the greatest force on the hearts of others." It was first published in 1649, and since then, it has gone through many successive editions—surpassed, in number of editions, by, perhaps, no other book but the *Pilgrim's Progress*, or his own "Call to the Unconverted." All the editions subsequent to 1659 are distinguished by one painful peculiarity. In the Commonwealth editions, he has introduced the name of Lord Brook, Hampden, and Pym, as among the glorified saints whom he should meet in "the everlasting rest;" but in impressions under the Restoration, these names are left out. The motive for omitting them was to please Dr Jane, and to induce him to license the publication of the volume. It is a wonder and a grief to all the friends of Baxter, that he should have thus truckled; for the omission was against his own firm judgment concerning these illustrious individuals; and the omission, like all other such will-sacrifices, was far from giving satisfaction to the prelatical party. According to Baxter's own unchanged opinion, Hampden, Pym, and Brook, were still in the everlasting rest, though their names were no longer in his book about that rest. This omission marred the honour, but it did not injure the usefulness, of the book. Many thousands own their conversion to it; and many more owe to it their growth in grace, and their edification in love and heavenly mindedness.

Baxter's afflictions and meditations on the Saints' Rest had prepared him for his pastoral work at Kidderminster, whither he hastened from Rous Lench. The account of his ministry in that town, made famous by his pastorate, will be found in the second chapter of this Essay. He spent there fourteen years, which were as eventful in the history of England as they were in the life of the laborious minister. In these years Cromwell marched his troops against the Parliament and subdued it. Charles, after a life of improbity and bloodshed, was seized by the army and executed; the Commonwealth was established, and Cromwell proclaimed its Protector; the Scottish Covenanters were intriguing with Charles II. at Breda, and sacrificed Montrose to their schemes; war was devastating Ireland and Scotland; Charles II. entered England, lost the battle of Worcester, and immortalized the royal oak; the Protector died, and his son was deposed; England ceased to be puritan; and General Monk had matured his plots for duping the army to restore Charles to the throne of his father.

Such was the state of England when Baxter left Kidderminster, and reached London, April 13, 1660. On his arrival he conversed with Lord Lauderdale on the nation's obligation to the oath which

they had sworn to Richard Cromwell. This Lauderdale was the man who had procured letters to be written by Protestant ministers in France, filled with assurances that Charles was firmly attached to the Protestant religion. A new parliament was immediately summoned to cancel the obligation of the oath to Richard Cromwell, and to invite Charles II. to England. To this parliament Baxter preached at St Margaret's, Westminster, April 30, on 'Repentance, from Ezek. xxxvi. 31. Immediately after the sermon, the House was to meet to vote the return of Charles. On May 10, he preached again from Luke x. 30, on "Right Rejoicing," to the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of London, who were keeping a day of solemn thanksgiving for General Monk's success in bringing the king back. As Charles passed through the city of London to Westminster, the London ministers attended him with acclamations, and, by the hands of the oldest minister among them, the venerable Arthur Jackson, they "presented him with a richly adorned Bible, which he received, and told them that it should be the rule of his actions." Thus, before he had yet reached his throne, Charles began to act the hypocrite, even with the Bible in his hand, and to treat with flagitious duplicity the men who had restored him to his crown. These ministers were honest men, but they allowed themselves to be duped and entrapped; and, in two years after their acclamations, he made them pay dearly for their silly confidence in royal promises. Oh! had wisdom uttered her voice in some street, and cried in some place of concourse, or in the opening of the gates of London, while Charles was passing, and had told these ministers, "PUT NOT YOUR TRUST IN PRINCES,"* many wailings and much shame would have been saved this country.

After the Restoration, ten or twelve of the Presbyterian ministers were made royal chaplains; and among these was Baxter, "at his Majesty's own desire, as an acceptable furtherance of his service." In this office none of them ever preached except Mr Calamy, Dr Reynolds, Dr Spurslow, Mr Woodbridge, and Baxter, once each. After his appointment, he had an interview with the king on the practicableness of effecting an agreement between the Episcopalians and Presbyterians, which ended in the royal farce of the meeting at Sion College. In September 4, 1660, Charles published his insulting Declaration, to which Baxter drew up an answer, in such terms of firmness and manliness as to alarm Calamy and Reynolds,

* At Breda, April 4, 1660, Charles II. gave his royal word in these terms—"We do declare a liberty to tender consciences, and that no man shall be disquieted, or called in question, for differences of opinion which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom." This he had the profligacy to declare on, what he called, "the word of a Christian king."

who declared that "it would not be so much as received." When Baxter's modified reply was presented, a modified declaration of the king was proclaimed, which was as unsatisfactory as its first composition. Defective and even inselent as the king's modified declaration was, the very pastors who had enabled Charles to insult them, met to thank him for the minimum of liberty which he graciously gave them. When they presented their thanks to the king, Baxter refused to attend. On hearing this, the king sent for Baxter the next day, and flattered him, but did not change his opinion about royal fidelity. These discussions concluded with farce the second, called the Savoy Conference, at which Sheldon acted with the haughtiness and tyranny of a Wolsey.

Though the Presbyterian Divines were thus treated by the court and the hierarchy, the Nonconformists were known and felt to be a powerful body in the country. As a measure of kingcraft, therefore, it was proposed that the best way to silence them was to make some of their leaders Lord Bishops; and, accordingly, Hereford was offered to Baxter, Litchfield and Coventry to Calamy, and Norwich to Reynolds, who accepted it on the ground that the *congé d'elire* was taken out without his knowledge by a friend. An emissary of the court, Colonel Birch, waited upon Baxter again and again to get him to intimate his consent; but he declared, that "if the old diocesan frame continued, he would not accept it." Even this was not enough, the Chancellor, Clarendon, had an interview with him, and asked him about his resolution, when the proposal was rejected for ever. In saying "Nolo Episcopari," he meant it as "the words of truth and soberness."

The next step in Baxter's life is one perfectly singular, and is a good illustration of his character. Having declined a bishopric, he entreated Clarendon to give him the poor curacy of Kidderminster. "My people," he says, "were so dear to me, and I to them, that I would have been with them on the lowest terms. Some laughed at me for refusing a bishopric, and petitioning to be a reading-vicar's curate; but I had little hopes of so good a condition, at least for any considerable time. The Chancellor, and even the King, professed to be for his restoration to his people, but they allowed themselves to be baffled by his well known enemy, Sir Ralph Clare; and Bishop Morley also was resolved that he should never again enter the diocese of Worcester." When the people at Kidderminster understood the disposition of Baxter towards them, "in a day's time they gathered the hands of sixteen hundred out of the eighteen hundred communicants," with the assurance of more, if they had only time given them. What Clarendon and the King had professed to fail to do, he tried to do for himself. "I went down," he says, "to

Worcestershire, to try whether it were possible to have any honest terms from the reading-vicar there, that I might preach to my former flock; but when I had preached twice or thrice, he denied me liberty to preach any more. * * * I offered to be his curate, and he refused it. I then offered to preach for nothing, and he refused it. And, lastly, I desired leave but once to administer the sacrament to the people, and to preach my farewell sermon to them, but he would not consent. At last I understood that he was directed by his superiors to do what he did." From Kidderminster, Baxter, after paying a hasty visit to his afflicted father in Shropshire, waited on Bishop Morley. "I reminded the Bishop," he says, "of his promise to grant me his license, &c.; but he refused me liberty to preach in his diocese, though I offered to preach only on the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and that only to such as had no preaching."

Baxter was silenced,—the man who had received his "ministry from the Lord Jesus," was rejected. He went to the Bishop's palace with "neither purse nor scrip." He said, "peace be to this house," but "the son of peace was not there." When the door of Worcester's palace closed on "holy Baxter," the event appeared trifling in episcopal judgment; but all the influence and bearings of that little event have not been yet developed. An edict has gone forth from the Lord, which says—"Into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same and say, Even the very dust of your city which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you." That dust, as it falls from the messenger, will have its influence on other interests. Natural Philosophy informs us, that a grain of sand on the point of a needle has its influence on the greatest and most remote bodies in the solar system. In the same manner, Revelation assures, that the dust from the sandals of ejected ministers, will, in the day of retribution, make it more tolerable for Sodom than for that city or that house which has rejected them.

After the prelate of Worcester had refused to license him in that diocese, he settled in London, and preached in various vacant pulpits, where his services were requested. After a year of such occasional, and always gratuitous ministrations, he resolved to become a colleague of the Rev. Dr Bates, at St Dunstan's in the West, where he preached once a-week. The subjects of his sermons seem to have been regularly reported in high quarters, and he was always charged with sedition and rebellion, till he preached the series which he afterwards published under the title of "The Formal Hypocrite Detected," when the low hypocrites that reported him, and the high hypocrites which heard their reports, ceased their accusations.

It was while preaching in St Dunstan's that he displayed that solemn and calm superiority to alarm and fear which is related by Dr Bates. The church of St Dunstan's had "an ill name, as very old, rotten, and dangerous;" when therefore "a little lime and dust, and perhaps a piece of brick or two, fell down the steeple" during service, the whole congregation was exceedingly alarmed, and every one rushed towards the doors. Baxter "sat down in the pulpit, seeing and pitying their vain distempers; and then, as soon as he could be heard, he rose and said, "We are in the service of God, to prepare ourselves, that we may be fearless at the great noise of the dissolving world, when the heavens shall pass away, and the elements melt with fervent heat." He then continued and finished his discourse, which was his last at St Dunstan's church, which had to be rebuilt.

Between this time and the passing of the anti-Christian Act of Uniformity, he continued to preach for some time at St Bride's in Fleet Street, and at St Ann's, Black Friars, and he had also a week-day lecture in Milk Street, supported by Mr Ashurst. Thus he continued to labour in his Master's work, till the shadows of Bartholomew Eve warned him to quit the English Church, which incessantly harassed him, and persecuted him even unto death.

The whole noble band of Nonconformists were about to be ejected from the Church of England on August 24, 1662; but Baxter resolved to quit that Church before the Act of Uniformity came into force, and he accordingly preached his last sermon on the 25th of the previous May. This he did, partly because his legal advisers informed him, that as he was only a Lecturer, the liberty of all lecturers terminated on the 25th of May; partly to let authority know that he would obey it in all that was lawful; but chiefly to let all the Ministers in England understand in time that he did not intend to conform, lest any should conform in the expectation that he would be a conformist. When the 24th of August came, two thousand illustrious, able, and faithful ministers—such two thousand as England saw never—were faithful to their consciences, and faithful to the God of truth and liberty; and they all quitted the English Church. Popery had its Bartholomew's day in France, and it shed the blood of myriads; and Prelacy has had its Bartholomew's day in England, and it covered it with the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity.

While Baxter was busy in devising schemes of comprehension for Episcopalians and Nonconformists, he was at the same time employing his thoughts and his heart on a subject of much delicacy and tenderness, and that was his marriage. On September 10, 1662, just a fortnight after the dark and black Bartholomew's day, he was married in Bennet Fink Church in Cheapside, by Mr Sa-

muel Clark, to Miss Margaret Charlton. Baxter was now forty-seven years of age, and Miss Charlton was about twenty-three. It had always been a part of his creed, that for ministers to marry was only barely lawful. All these things made his marriage notorious. "The king's marriage," he says, "was scarcely more talked of than mine." Two things brought Miss Charlton under the special notice of Baxter; she was born within three miles of his own native village, and, on her removal with her mother to Kidderminster, his ministry was the means of her conversion. Notwithstanding the inequality in their ages, he says that "the many strange occurrences which brought it to pass, would take away the wonder of her friends and mine"—but "in her case and mine there was much that was extraordinary, what it doth not concern the world to be acquainted with." The terms on which Baxter proposed marriage, and which Miss Charlton accepted, are these: First, "That I should have nothing that before our marriage was hers; that I, who wanted no earthly supplies, might not seem to marry her for covetousness. Secondly, That she would so alter her affairs that I might be entangled in no lawsuits. Thirdly, That she would expect none of my time which my ministerial work should require." They were "married in the Lord," and he found in her a help-meet for him, sometimes his fellow prisoner, and always the helper to his joy.

On June 1, 1663, Sheldon became Archbishop of Canterbury, a man of deep craftiness, of dexterous ability, and of unrelenting malignity against the Nonconformists; and, consequently, their sufferings were greatly aggravated on his accession to the primacy, especially through the severity of his act against private meetings. This law put all public service at an end. Baxter resolved to leave London; and he says, "I betook myself to live in the country, at Acton, that I might set myself to writing, and do what service I could for posterity, and live as much as I possibly could out of the world. Thither I went on the 14th of July 1663, where I followed my studies privately in quietness." Here he attended the church in one part of the day, and preached in his own house at another. Here also he finished some of his best works, especially his "Christian Directory." On March 26, 1665, he was nearly being shot dead. While he was preaching and administering the Lord's Supper, a bullet came in at the window, and passed close by him, but did him no hurt. The villain who had attempted to murder him was never discovered.

Towards the close of 1665 the Plague made its appearance in London, amidst all the troubles of a war with Holland. Baxter seems to have regarded this as a visitation upon England for the wickedness of the Corporation Act which had lately passed. He

says,—“ From London the plague is spread through many counties, especially next London, where few places, especially *corporations*, are free ; which makes me oft groan, and wish that London, and all the Corporations of England, would review the CORPORATION ACT, and their own acts, and speedily repent.” While Baxter was penning this noble sentiment, he was at Hampden, in Buckinghamshire, in the house of his beloved friend, Mr Richard Hampden, “ the true heir of his famous father’s sincerity, piety, and devotedness to God.” Here he continued while the plague raged about London.

It is probable that Nonconformity and Religious Liberty in England owe more to the Plague, and to the Fire of London, than to any other two causes in the providence of God. “ When the plague grew hot,” says Baxter, “ most of the conformable ministers fled, and left their flocks in the time of their extremity ; whereupon divers Nonconformists, pitying the dying and distressed people, when about ten thousand died in a week, resolved that no obedience to the laws of mortal man whatever could justify them in neglecting men’s souls and bodies in such extremities. They therefore resolved to stay with the people, and to go into the forsaken pulpits, though prohibited ; and also to visit the sick and the dying, and to get what relief they could for the poor, especially those that were shut up.” Yet while those noble and generous men were thus labouring in the very domain of death, and at the post which the hireling clergy had forsaken, Sheldon and Clarendon were forging the chains of the Five Mile Act to stop all their efforts. When the Plague ceased at Acton in March 1666, Baxter returned home, and “ found the church-yard like a ploughed field with graves, and many of his neighbours dead.”

The next mysterious Providence which promoted religious liberty was the great Fire of London. It broke out at midnight, September 2, 1666. Baxter says, that “ it was set on fire,” and he believed that the agents in this awful destruction “ of one of the fairest cities in the world ” were the Papists. Whether the suspicion be true or not, the report, and the common belief of it, shew in what degree of detestation all Papists were held in that age. After the fire, as well as during the plague, the religious condition of the Londoners was equally wretched and destitute, as far as the conforming clergy were concerned. When the churches were burnt, the parish ministers all departed, as if they had no ministry for the souls of men, except within the walls of churches. At this season, again, the generous Nonconformists came forth to the work of the ministry, with a disinterestedness and a diligence, that should have shamed their rivals and oppressors. This was the birth-season of dissenting chapels ; for the ministers now prepared large rooms, and “ plain chapels with

pulpits, seats, and galleries, for the reception of as many as would come:" and, says Baxter, "many of the citizens went to those meetings called private, more than went to the public parish churches." These magnanimous labours produced a fresh rumour about a "comprehension," and liberty of conscience; but the clergy opposed every effort for the restitution of the Nonconformists, and continued to refuse them all toleration till the fall of the wily Clarendon.

On the rise of the Duke of Buckingham, the preaching of the Nonconformists was connived at, "so that the people went openly to hear them without fear"—"and they did the like in most parts of England." In the mean time, Baxter was busily engaged at Acton with his illustrious friend Judge Hale in arranging the heads of a new scheme of Comprehension. While Judge Hale and Baxter were thus employed, the inquisitorial Sheldon addressed a circular letter to all the Bishops, requesting them to give an account of all the conventicles in their diocese. The result was, that many ministers were imprisoned; and one of Sheldon's first victims was Baxter. Information was laid against him by his neighbour, one Colonel Phillips, for preaching in his own house at Acton, and he had to appear before the magistrates at Brentford. These, after treating him rudely and insultingly, sent him to Clerkenwell prison, "where," says Baxter, "I had an honest jailer, who shewed me all the kindness he could." Mrs Baxter went to prison with her husband; and he says, "My wife was never so cheerful a companion to me as in prison, and was very much against my seeking to be released." From this prison he was liberated by a Habeas Corpus, but with an *obitum dictum* of the Judge that it was not on account of his innocence, but merely because of a flaw in the mittimus.

On his release, he found that his position was more difficult than he had apprehended; for the Five Mile Act prevented him from returning to Acton, where he had a house of large rent; and that his enemies among the magistrates had made a fresh and a more accurate mittimus to send him to Newgate "among thieves and murderers;" he felt, therefore, that he must at any cost leave Middlesex.

His next place of abode was Totteridge, near Barnet, where he lived in "a few mean rooms, which were so extremely smoky, and the place withal so cold, that he spent the winter with great pain." It was during his stay at Totteridge that he had his controversy with Dr Owen; that Lauderdale offered to make him a Scottish Bishop, or a Scottish Principal of one of the Universities; that he wrote a great part of his "*Methodus Theologica*;" that he lost a great part of his property through the bankruptcy of the King's Exchequer; that he aided Lord Orrery in forming the "Healing Measure," which failed; and that he availed himself of the King's "Dispensing De-

claration" to recommence preaching. Trusting in the word of a king, he removed to London, and preached as one of the lecturers at Pinners' Hall. He says: "On the 19th of November (1672), my baptism day, was the first day, after ten years' silence, that I preached in a tolerated assembly." On January 1673, he began a Tuesday lecture at Mr Turner's church in New Street, Fetter Lane, but "never took a penny of money for it from any one." He had also a lecture at St James' Market-House. In this neighbourhood his ministry was very extensively useful, though it was now illegal; having been made so by the circumstance that the Parliament had annulled the King's Dispensing Declaration, and had passed the Test Act. Informations were again laid against him, in which an Alderman of London, a Sir Thomas Davies, figures as a beast of prey seeking whom he might devour, who distrained his goods for fifty pounds for preaching his lecture in New Street.

In consequence of the dangerous state of his place of preaching at St James's, his friends pressed him to obtain another place, and Oxenden chapel was built for him by their liberality. "Mr Henry Coventry, one of his Majesty's principal secretaries, who had a house joining to it, and was a member of parliament, spake twice against it in the Parliament, but no one seconded him." Here he was incessantly worried by his persecutors. "I was so long wearied," he says, "with keeping my doors shut against them that came to distrain my goods for preaching, that I was fain to go from my house, and to sell all my goods, and to hide my library first, and afterwards to sell it; so that, if books had been my treasure (and I valued little more on earth), I had now been without a treasure. For about twelve years, I was driven a hundred miles from them; and when I had paid dear for the carriage, after two or three years I was forced to sell them." As an illustration of his dangers at Oxenden Chapel, he gives the following account of Mr Seddon, who was to preach for him during his absence in the country: "I had left word that if he would but step into my house through a door, he was in no danger; they not having power to break open any but the meeting-house. While he was preaching, three justices, supposed of Secretary Coventry's sending, came to the door to seize the preacher. They thought it had been I, and had prepared a warrant upon the Oxford Act to send me for six weeks to the common jail."

After the silence of a whole year, he opened another place of preaching in the parish of St Martin. In the spring of 1676, Charles, utterly heedless of the "word of a Christian king" given at Breda, urged all the judges and magistrates to put the laws against Nonconformists in strict execution, yet Baxter recommenced preaching at a chapel in Swallow Street, while his own stood empty, at the

expense to him of thirty pounds a-year for ground rent. A fresh warrant was issued against him, and for twenty-four Sabbaths constables and beadles watched the chapel door to apprehend him.

On the 14th of June 1681, Baxter sustained the irreparable loss of his excellent and heroic wife. She was buried in Christchurch, and Howe preached her funeral sermon. Her husband praised her in the gates, and in the sketch of her character says, "She was the meetest helper that I could have had in the world." She was only forty when she died.

On August 24, 1682, he preached his last sermon in New Street, "just that day twenty years that I, and near two thousand more, had been by law forbidden to preach." "I took that day leave of the pulpit and public work in a thankful congregation." "When I had ceased preaching, and was nearly risen from extremity of pain, I was suddenly surprised by a poor, violent informer, and many constables and officers, who rushed in, apprehended me, and served on me one warrant to seize my person for coming within five miles of a corporation, and five more warrants to distrain for a hundred and ninety pounds for five sermons." In this state he accompanied them to the magistrate to be sent to jail, but his physician meeting him, made oath that he could not go to prison without danger of death. The magistrates represented the affair to the King, and Charles consented that he should not be sent to prison for the present, that he might die at home. They, however, seized his books and goods, and even the bed which he lay sick on, and sold them all. "I had no remedy but utterly to forsake my house and goods and all, and take secret lodgings at a distance, in a stranger's house."

In 1684 he suffered similar treatment. "While I lay in pain and languishing, the justices of the session sent warrants to apprehend me, about a thousand more being in catalogue to be bound to their good behaviour. I refused to open my chamber door to them, their warrant not being to break it open; but they set six officers at my study door, who watched all night, and kept me from my bed and food; so that the next day I yielded to them, who carried me, scarce able to stand, to the sessions, and bound me in four hundred pounds."

Early in 1685 appeared his *New Testament with Notes*, and on February 28 he was committed to prison on a warrant from Judge Jefferies, on account of some sentiments in his *Paraphrase*. On the 18th of May, it was moved that, on account of his great bodily pains, further time might be given him before his trial. Judge Jefferies said, "I will not give him a minute's time more to save his life. Yonder stands Oates in the pillory, and he says he suffers

for the truth, and so says Baxter ; but if Baxter did but stand on the other side of the pillory with him, I would say, two of the greatest rogues and rascals in the kingdom stood there." The trial came on at Guildhall on May 30, before Jefferies. Over every seat on which this ermined ruffian ever sat might be inscribed, " By appointment, Butcher to the Royal Family." When Baxter's counsel was defending him, Jefferies said, " This is an old rogue, who has poisoned the world with his Kidderminster doctrine. An old schismatical knave, a hypocritical villain. Hang him, this one old fellow hath cast more reproach upon the constitution and discipline of our church than will be wiped off this hundred years ; but I'll handle him for it ; for, by G——, he deserves to be whipped through the city." When Baxter attempted to explain and vindicate himself, Jefferies said to him, " Richard, Richard, dost thou think we'll hear thee poison the court ? Richard, thou art an old fellow, an old knave ; thou has written books enough to load a cart, every one is full of sedition, I might say treason, as an egg is full of meat. Hadst thou been whipped out of thy writing trade forty years ago, it had been happy. Thou hast one foot in the grave ; it is time for thee to begin to think what account thou intendest to give. But leave thee to thyself, and I see thou'lt go on as thou hast begun ; but, by the grace of God, I'll look after thee." After Jefferies had charged the jury in a most un-English and outrageous manner, Baxter said, " Does your Lordship think that any jury will pretend to pass a verdict upon me upon such a trial ?" The ruffian replied, " I'll warrant you, Mr Baxter, don't you trouble your head about that." Jefferies was right, for without quitting the box, the jury found him " guilty." At this trial Sir Henry Ashurst, the son of Baxter's old and faithful friend, acted nobly, led the venerable and injured friend of his father through the crowd, and conveyed him home in his own carriage. Baxter applied in vain to the Bishop of London to use his influence to obtain a new trial, or a milder judgment than was likely to be awarded to him by Jefferies. On the 29th of June his judgment was pronounced. He was to be fined five hundred pounds, to lie in prison till he paid it, and to be bound to his good behaviour for seven years. This award was one of the first acts of James II., who had ascended the throne on the 6th of February. The prosecution was promoted by the efforts of L'Estrange, a name of some rank among the learned men of his day. Every thing contributed to render the trial of Baxter a burning stigma on the royalty, law, and literature of England.

Baxter resolved to go to prison, for he could not pay the fine ; and even if he paid it, it was likely he would soon be prosecuted again. In prison he was visited by some of the clergy, who lamented

his unjust verdict. He continued in his prison nearly two years, when Lord Powis used his influence at Court to procure his release. He left the prison on November 24, 1686. As a favour, King James allowed him to live in London, notwithstanding the Oxford Act; and having lived for some months within the rules of the King's Bench, he removed on February 28 to Charterhouse Yard, and renewed his pulpit labours in company with Mr Sylvester.

In these stirring times, Baxter's age, sufferings, infirmities, and persecutions, prevented him from taking much interest in the agitations and changes which were taking place around him. Neither James' downfall, nor the glorious Revolution of 1688, seems to have drawn forth any remark from his pen or his pulpit. The last measure of legislation in which Baxter acted any part, was the Act of Toleration passed by William and Mary, which placed all Nonconformists under the shield of the British constitution. The last religious movement in which he interested himself, was the Bond of Agreement which was formed between the Presbyterians and Independents of London, memorable as commencing the name of Presbyterians, properly so called, in England.

In Charterhouse Square he lived near Mr Sylvester's meeting-house, where he preached gratuitously on Sunday mornings, and once a fortnight on Thursday mornings. After spending four years and a half in these engagements, he gave them up, and "opened his doors morning and evening every day" to all who would join him in family worship. Eventually his growing infirmities constrained him to give up this engagement, and confined him to his own chamber. "He continued to preach," says Dr Bates, "so long, notwithstanding his wasted, languishing body, that the last time he almost died in the pulpit. It would doubtless have been his joy to have been transfigured in the mount. Not long after, he felt the approaches of death, and was confined to his sick-bed. He said to his friends, 'You come hither to learn to die; I am not the only person that must go this way. I can assure you that your whole life, be it ever so long, is little enough to prepare for death.' After a slumber he waked and said, 'I shall rest from my labour.' A minister then present said, 'and your works shall follow you.' To whom he replied, 'No works: I will leave out works, if God will grant me the other.'"

When a friend reminded him of his past usefulness, he said, "I was but a pen in God's hands, and what praise is due to a pen?" In the extremity of his agonies he would sometimes pray earnestly to God for a speedy release, and then he would check himself and say, "It is not fit for me to prescribe; when thou wilt, what thou wilt, how thou wilt." He was once asked how he felt in his in-

ward man, and his reply was, "I bless God I have a well-grounded assurance of my eternal happiness, and great peace and comfort within." On the day before his death, Dr Bates and Mr Mather of New England visited him. To them he expressed his great willingness to die; and when the question was asked, "How he did?" his answer was, "Almost well." This was on a Monday, and he had fully expected and hoped that he should have died on the preceding Sunday, which to Mr Sylvester he called "a high day," in the expectation of his joyful change. He languished through Monday, and on Tuesday, December 8, 1691, about four o'clock in the morning, he had his last conflict with disease, languished into life, and the "Reformed Pastor" found himself in the "Saints' Everlasting Rest."

His body was interred in Christ Church, with the body of his wife. Men of all ranks, and ministers of Nonconformist and of Conformist orders attended his funeral. Two funeral sermons were preached for him; one by his colleague, Mr Sylvester, and the other by his friend Dr Bates, both of which were published.

CHAPTER II.

BAXTER'S MINISTRY.

If WHITEFIELD is properly called the prince of preachers, BAXTER deserves to be ranked as the prince of pastors. The Holy Spirit made him a model pastor, and in the ecclesiastical history of England, since the Reformation, no name can be mentioned as being his equal in the pastorate. To form an adequate conception of his pastoral character, it is necessary first to read his own ideal of a Christian minister in his "Gildas Salvianus, or Reformed Pastor," and then to see his working out of that ideal in the "Reliquiæ Baxterianæ," where he recounts his plans and methods of pastoral toil at Kidderminster.

Baxter commenced his ministry as a Conformist. His family, though inclined to Puritanism, were all Conformists, and so were all his connexions. The whole of his theological reading had been against Nonconformity. When he was about twenty years of age, he became acquainted with several able Nonconformist divines in Shropshire, and especially with the Rev. Walter Cradock, the apostle of Nonconformity in North Wales. In their society he found an atmosphere which was refreshing to every thing devout,

unearthly and holy, in his own mind. The fervid piety, the serious conversation, and the lofty devotion of these men raised them very highly in his esteem, and the prosecutions which they suffered kindled his indignation against the hierarchy that oppressed them: but neither the holy character of the Shropshire Puritans, nor the persecuting disposition of the prelates, produced in him any scruples about conforming. To be a minister, he must be episcopally ordained; to be ordained, he must subscribe the Articles and the Liturgy—and to subscribe consent and assent to them he had no hesitation, because, says he, "I had never once read the Book of Ordination." In 1638, he was ordained at Worcester by Bishop Thornborough. The first sermon he ever preached was in the Upper Church at Dudley, while he was head master of the grammar school there. He laboured in that town as a preacher for about a year, but without any pastoral relation to the people.

The next scene of his ministry was Bridgenorth, a town at that time full of public houses. He preached here for nearly two years to large congregations of ignorant and besotted people, with very few instances of success, and with many discouragements. It is still reported in Bridgenorth that when he preached his farewell sermon to the people, he remarked that their hearts were as hard as the sandstone rock on which their church is built. It was at Bridgenorth that he became a Nonconformist. When, in 1640, regal tyranny and prelatical madness imposed upon the clergy the notorious *Et Cætera* Oath; * binding all the ministers of truth and liberty never to change their opinions concerning bishops, deans, &c., its ridiculous and wicked pretensions were carefully examined by the Salopian Conformists assembled at Bridgenorth. After this discussion, Baxter resolved that he would not subscribe the oath, and that he would honestly and manfully investigate the claims of Prelacy. He read with diligence and candour the works of distinguished and learned Nonconformists, as well as those of able Episcopalians, and he came to the conclusion that Diocesan Episcopacy was of unscriptural origin, opposed to the simplicity of primitive pastorship, and subversive of scriptural discipline and order in the church. The *Et Cætera* Oath produced many results favourable to the progress of Nonconformity, and among its *et cætera* consequences one was the Presbyterianism of Baxter.

On April 5, 1641, Baxter was appointed lecturer at Kidderminster. His removal to this town was brought about partly by the parliament, and partly by the people. The clergy, in every

* One part of the oath ran thus—"Nor will I ever give my consent to alter the government of this church by archbishops, bishops, deans, and archdeacons, &c., as it stands now established, and ought to stand."

part of the country, were so ignorant and dissolute, that the parliament appointed a committee to enquire into the religious state of the country, and to hear the complaints and the petitions of the people against their ministers. The inhabitants of Kidderminster availed themselves of this arrangement, and presented a petition against the Rev. Mr Dance, their minister, who was a drunkard, and who preached only once a quarter. This petition resulted in the committee's invitation to Baxter to take the lectureship, which was seconded by an affectionate letter from the people of the town.

Kidderminster had many attractions for Baxter: the town was large, and afforded an adequate sphere for his commanding talents; the people were generally of a profligate character, for which his fervid and rousing preaching was well adapted; and, among the inhabitants, there were a few who were sighing for the abominations of the place, and who would cheerfully welcome and further the efforts of a holy minister to do good. He commenced his ministry among them by preaching for one Sunday on probation, and was then cordially chosen by the people as their lecturer. He spent here two years, which proved, in the arrangement of Providence, a kind of disciplinary novitiate to his remarkable labours there at a subsequent period. His first labours at Kidderminster were interrupted and blasted by the unhappy rupture between Charles I. and the Parliament. When the first rumours of a civil war were heard in the moans of an oppressed people, Baxter began to develop some of the mental characteristics which marked the subsequent history of his life; for he sided with neither party, but found fault with both. This was not from timidity; much less was it from compromise; but it was from his sincere desire to secure and promote peace on earth and good will among men. All the writings of Baxter demonstrate that he was a firm and thorough friend to the cause of the parliament; and that though he was loyal to the monarchy and the throne, he detested the consummate and heartless duplicity of Charles. All this the people of Kidderminster believed and knew; and, therefore, when the king's declaration was one day being proclaimed at the market-place, just while Baxter was passing by, the officer who read it exclaimed, "there goes a traitor." The rabble, who already hated him on account of his serious and faithful preaching, responded immediately and heartily, "Down with the roundheads"—and then directed their march in pursuit of him, with the resolution to take away his life. As the town of Kidderminster, and indeed nearly every town in Worcestershire were openly for the king, Baxter was advised to quit the place and retire from the county altogether.

In the sketch of his life given in the preceding chapter, his re-

tirement to Gloucester—his brief return to Kidderminster—his preaching at Alcester on the Sunday that the battle of Edgehill was fought—his first year at Coventry—his two months' sojourn at Shropshire at the siege of Wem—and his second year at Coventry, have been recorded. In all these wanderings he was ever faithful to the work of the ministry, preaching whenever he could and wherever he might—sometimes in towns, and sometimes in villages and rural hamlets; now to soldiers in garrison, and anon to peasants in the highways and hedges. His village labours were carried on amidst many dangers, and especially at the hazard of apprehension and imprisonment. As an instance of the state of the times, and as a memorial of the interposition of Providence in his behalf, the following anecdote is introduced on the authority of the Congregational Magazine.*

The report is, that during Baxter's residence at Coventry, several of the Nonconformist ministers of that city united with him in preaching a lecture at a private house, on a neighbouring common. "The time of worship was generally a very early hour. Mr Baxter left Coventry in the evening, intending to preach the lecture the following morning. The night being dark, he lost his way; and, after wandering about a considerable time, he came to a gentleman's house, where he asked for direction. The servant who came to the door informed his master that a person of very respectable appearance had lost his way. The gentleman, thinking it would be unsafe for such a person to be wandering on the common at so late an hour, requested the servant to invite him in. Mr Baxter readily accepted the kind proposal, and met with a very hospitable reception. His conversation was such as to give his host an exalted idea of his good sense, and his extensive information. The gentleman, wishing to know the quality of his guest, said, after supper, 'as most persons have some employment or profession in life, I have no doubt, sir, that you have yours.' Mr Baxter replied, with a smile, 'Yes, sir, I am a man catcher.' 'A man catcher,' said the gentleman, 'are you? I am very glad to hear you say so, for you are the very person I want. I am a Justice of the Peace in this district, and am commissioned to secure the person of Dick Baxter, who is expected to preach at a conventicle in this neighbourhood early to-morrow morning; you shall go with me, and, I doubt not, we shall easily apprehend the rogue.' Mr Baxter very prudently consented to accompany him.

"Accordingly, the gentleman, on the following morning, took Mr Baxter in his carriage to the place where the meeting was to be

* Congr. Mag. vol. iii.

held. When they arrived at the spot, they saw a considerable number of people hovering about; for seeing the carriage of the Justice, and suspecting his intentions, they were afraid to enter the house. The Justice, observing this, said to Mr Baxter—'I am afraid that they have obtained some information of my design; Baxter has probably been apprised of it, and therefore will not fulfil his engagement; for you see the people will not go into the house. I think, if we extend our ride a little farther, our departure may encourage them to assemble, and on our return we may fulfil our commission.' When they returned, they found their efforts useless, for the people still appeared unwilling to assemble.

"The magistrate, thinking he should be disappointed of the object he had in view, observed to his companion, that, as the people were very much disaffected to Government, he would be much obliged to him to address them on the subject of loyalty and good behaviour. Mr Baxter replied, that perhaps this would not be deemed sufficient; for, as a religious service was the object for which they were met together, they would not be satisfied with advice of that nature: but, if the magistrate would begin with prayer, he would then endeavour to say something to them. The gentleman replied, putting his hand to his pocket, 'Indeed, sir, I have not got my prayer book with me, or I would readily comply with your proposal. However, I am persuaded that a person of your appearance and respectability would be able to pray with them as well as to talk to them. I beg, therefore, that you will be so good as to begin with prayer.' This being agreed to, they alighted from the carriage and entered the house, and the people, hesitating no longer, immediately followed them.

Mr Baxter then commenced the service, and prayed with that seriousness and fervour for which he was so eminent. The magistrate, standing by, was soon melted into tears. The good divine then preached in his accustomed lively and zealous manner. When he had concluded, he turned to the Justice and said, 'Sir, I am the very DICK BAXTER of whom you are in pursuit. I am entirely at your disposal.' The magistrate, however, had felt so much during the service, and saw things in so different a light, that he laid aside all his enmity to the Nonconformists, and ever afterwards became their sincere friend and advocate, and it is believed also a decided Christian."

Baxter commenced his ministry in Coventry on the condition that he should neither be obliged to take a commission in the army nor be appointed a chaplain to a regiment. His duties were to preach once a-week to the soldiers, and once on the Sabbaths to the town's people. For his labours he took no remuneration but his diet. In this garrison he followed his studies, he says, "as quietly as in the

time of peace." After the battle of Naseby, fought while he was at Coventry, his scruples to join the army gave way before what he heard and saw on visiting Cromwell's troops near Leicester. He found that the church in the army was a different thing from the church amid citizens and peasantry. He was astonished and grieved to hear civil and religious liberty openly, freely, and manfully discussed by the soldiers. "I heard," he says, "the plotting heads hot upon that which intimated their intention to subvert Church and State;" and these were Cromwell's chief favourites, and they were the soul of the army, though in number they were only as one to twenty. Several officers pressed him to join the army, and after consulting his ministerial friends in Coventry, and obtaining the reluctant consent of the city garrison to release him, he joined it as chaplain to Colonel Whalley's regiment. Among his friends in the garrison, he said expressly that he attached himself to the army for the purpose of doing his best against its sectarian tendencies. On hearing him, Colonel Purefoy said very magisterially, "Let me hear no more of that. If NOL CROMWELL should hear any soldier but speak such a word, he would cleave his crown."

On joining the army, he was introduced to Cromwell, who received him very coolly, and never afterwards conversed with him, nor was he ever allowed an opportunity to attend the meetings of the officers at head quarters. It is not unlikely that Colonel Purefoy had communicated Baxter's designs to Cromwell, and this was the reason of the coolness; but another fact might also be in the recollection of Cromwell which would induce him to treat the divine with some reserve. When Cromwell lay at Cambridge, he collected his first troop of Ironsides, which he and his officers tried to form into a church; that is, a troop of church members, a literally militant church, or fighting congregation. This troop invited Baxter, while at Coventry, to become its pastor. In reply, he not only declined their invitation, but rebuked them for their constitution, and for their designs. This peevish denial and ill-timed reproof are enough to account for the coolness with which he was received by the army.

His ministry in the army was an utter failure. He was too belligerent in polemic theology, and too much of a field-marshal in logic, to maintain successfully a ministry of peace among soldiers, and especially among the independent Ironsides. In his ministerial labours, he set himself to discover the ecclesiastical corruptions of the soldiers—disputed with the troops upon all points, political as well as religious—contended against all varieties of opinions among them, whether Antinomianism, Arminianism, or Quakerism and Anabaptism, but especially against Voluntarism. In describing the army, he says, "The most frequent and vehement disputes were for liberty of

conscience, as they called it; that is, that the civil magistrate had nothing to do to determine matters of religion by constraint or restraint." With the leaders of these heroes of freedom, Baxter would dispute in the hearing of the rest, to try to make them the laughing-stock of the troops. The consequence was, that he was both bitterly scorned and cautiously avoided. It is due to these first and noble disciples of liberty of conscience to record, that the failure of his ministry among them was to be traced more to the controversial tendencies of his own mind than to the military habits of the soldiers. To this fact he gives himself a candid and an honest testimony. "Many of those honest soldiers who were tainted but with some doubts about liberty of conscience or independency, were men who would discourse of the points of sanctification and Christian experience very seriously." As a proof of the manner in which he was treated and avoided in the army, he says—"All the two years that I was in the army, even my old bosom friend who had lived in my house, and been dearest to me, James Borry, then Captain, after Colonel and Major, the Lord of the Upper House, who had formerly invited me to Cromwell's old troop, did never once invite me to the army at first, nor invite me to his quarters, nor ever once come to visit me, or ever saw me, save twice or thrice that we met by accident."

After many marches and counter-marches with the army for two years, and after many attacks of disease, through which it is not necessary now to follow him, he settled at Kidderminster, much to the joy of his people, and much to the honour of his own-immortal character.

Baxter's settlement at Kidderminster was the greatest honour that God ever conferred on that picturesque town. His pastorship there will be had in everlasting remembrance, when the skill and the wealth produced by its peculiar manufactory will be forgotten for ever. As a model pastor, his character deserves to be known, studied, and imitated, yea, if possible, surpassed. To form a proper estimate of his pastoral labours, it is necessary to know the character of the inhabitants before he settled among them, the state of his health amid his numerous labours, the various plans of usefulness which he adopted, the amount of his success, and the peculiar advantages which he had for carrying on his operations.

The character of the inhabitants of Kidderminster, at the period of his settlement, was as degraded and as unpromising as an incompetent and profligate clergy could make it. The vicar of the place did not understand even the substance of the catechism or creed. His preaching consisted in scraping together, once a quarter, "a few words which he so said over as to move pity in his auditors." At-

tached to the parish there was a chapel, which was supplied by an old curate as ignorant as his vicar. This curate got his living by celebrating unlawful marriages. "I knew not," says Baxter, "how to keep him from reading the prayers, for I judged it a sin to tolerate him in any sacred office." In one of the suburban districts, called the Rock, there were two chapels. The curate of one of these got his living by cutting faggots; and the other curate by making ropes, "their ability being answerable to their studies and employments." It is no wonder that under the ministry of such clergy the whole populace of the town had become a disorderly mass and an unruly rabble. The people were hostile to real religion under every name and form, whether conformist or nonconformist. They compelled Baxter to leave the town and the county to preserve his life, and they resolutely opposed two or three attempts which the congregation made to restore him. This fact in the history of Kidderminster, will supply a salutary lesson to some ministers in the present day, who, in contemplating some new sphere of labour proposed to them, speak of it as abounding with "up-hill work." If any pastor on earth had "up-hill work," Baxter had it. Baxter's discouragements, and Baxter's devotedness, should cancel such phrase from every minister's vocabulary, for in "destroying the works of the devil," he must expect difficulty, toil, and suffering.

Such was Kidderminster: and now see the man who is going to labour for Christ in it. In bodily health he seems a very Lazarus, and his painful diseases would have been by many a sufficient apology for doing nothing in pastoral efforts. He says, "in my labours at Kidderminster, after my return, I did all under languishing weakness, being seldom an hour free from pain. Many a time have I been brought very low, and received the sentence of death in myself, when my poor, honest, praying neighbours have met; and, upon their fasting and earnest prayers, I have been recovered." "Another time, I had a tumour rose on one of the tonsils in my throat, white and hard like a bone, above the hardness of any schyrrous tumour. I feared a cancer. This proved obstinate against all remedies, when, at the end of about a quarter of a year, I was checked in conscience that I had never publicly praised God particularly for any of the deliverances vouchsafed me." He was now writing the second part of the "Saint's Rest," and while he was penning the passage of gratitude to God for his mercies, "the tumour vanished," he says; "and no sign wherever it had been remained; nor did I know what went with it to this day." "Another time, being in danger of an oegilops, and (to be brief) at divers times, in divers weaknesses, pains, dangers, I have been delivered

upon earnest prayers." "After abundance of distempers and languishings, I fell at last into a flux hepaticus, and after that into manifold dangers necessarily too long to be cited." He had very distressing headaches, and a stomach so disordered, that "a spoonful of wine would disturb him for a whole fortnight." His body was indeed a body of death, a vile body, sufficient to clog any soul, and to weigh down any common pastor. In addition to all the pains endured, let it be remembered what debilitating influence such a body would have upon the mind and upon the temper, indisposing the mind to work, and souring the temper against all pastoral intercourse with his people.

Such was the man who regenerated Kidderminster. It is now to be seen what he did, and how he did it. It was remarked at the commencement of this Essay, that one purpose of its being written was to interest young ministers in the pastoral character of Baxter. To promote this purpose, it is thought desirable to place the elements of his extensive usefulness in an adjusted order, that they might be apprehended with the greatest possible distinctness. This is the reason why they are arranged under separate and distinct heads.

I. BAXTER'S PLANS OF USEFULNESS.

The methods which he adopted for the regeneration of Kidderminster are the following:—

1. Before the wars he preached twice every Lord's day, and afterwards once a Sabbath.

2. On Monday and Tuesday in each week, his assistant and himself took fourteen families between them for catechising and conference: Baxter taking the town, and the assistant the parish. In these visits he heard them recite the words of the catechism, and then examined them in the meaning of it, and finally urged them to practise what they knew. He spent about an hour with each family, making seven hours a day.

3. He preached a lecture every Thursday morning; and after the lecture had "the company of several godly ministers, with whom he spent the afternoon in the truest recreation."

4. Every Thursday evening he had his neighbours to meet him at his own house. On these occasions one of them repeated the leading thoughts of the sermon that had been preached in the morning; and others proposed their difficulties, and cases of conscience. These meetings closed by one or more engaging in extempore prayer, and sometimes he himself prayed.

5. Once a-week the young people met a few of the members more privately, when they spent three hours in prayer together; and, especially on Saturday night, they met at some of their houses to repeat the sermons of the last Lord's day, and to pray, and prepare themselves for the morrow.

6. Once in a few weeks, Baxter and his people held, on some occasion or other, a day of humiliation and prayer.

7. Every religious woman that was safely delivered in childbirth, if able, kept a day of open thanksgiving with some of her neighbours, praising God, singing psalms, and soberly feasting together.

8. On the first Wednesday in every month was held the monthly meeting for parish discipline.

9. Every first Thursday in the month was the Minister's meeting for discipline and disputation, and mutual conference, at which he was "almost constant moderator;" and for which he generally prepared a written determination.

This was indeed a week well filled up, and well spent. His only time for study was Monday, after spending seven hours in pastoral visit; Tuesday the same; Wednesday entirely, except the first Wednesday in the month; and the whole of Friday and Saturday. When his manifold labours, his intense sufferings, his laborious preparations, are taken into consideration, his industry must appear stupendous, and his economy of time virtuously avaricious. In his visitation to any district of the town, he expected to see every family, and he was resolved to have an interview with them, if possible. As an instance of this resolution, the following anecdote is current in Shropshire. In some streets, he found some families so obdurate that they refused him admission, and the door was continued closed as long as he was known to be in the neighbourhood. In such cases, his practice was, on another day, to enter some friendly house which commanded a view of the door that had been closed against him, and thence watch to see if the door were open or on the jar; and whenever he saw the door partly open, he seized the opportunity, entered the house, and had religious conversation with the inmates.

II. BAXTER'S SUCCESS.

Having presented his plans and methods of labour, it is now proper to notice how they worked, and to record the amount of his success. In reference to his success, he says—"I have mentioned my sweet and acceptable employment, let me, to the praise of my gracious Lord, acquaint you with some of my success. And I will

not suppress it, though I foreknow that the malignant will impute the mention of it to pride and ostentation; for it is the sacrifice of thanksgiving which I owe to my gracious God, which I will not deny him for fear of being censured as proud, lest I prove myself proud indeed."

1. His public preaching met with great acceptance. He was popular in the town, and even those that were so hostile to him before the wars, not only became tractable, but also attended his ministry.

2. The congregation increased, and became so numerous that five galleries were built in succession to accommodate the crowds that attended, though the church itself was large and commodious. Even at the private meetings the place was well attended.

3. No disorder was to be seen on the street on the Lord's day. He says—"You might hear an hundred families singing psalms, and repeating sermons, as you passed through the streets." "When I came thither first, there was about one family in a street that worshipped God, and called on his name; and when I came away, there were some streets where there was not past (*i. e.* more than) one family in the side of a street that did not so." This was the case even with the inns and public-houses of the town.

4. The number of his regular communicants averaged sixteen hundred; "of whom," he says, "there was not twelve that I had not good hopes of as to their sincerity."

5. When he began personal conference with each family, and catechised them, there were very few families in all the town that refused to come; and they consisted chiefly of beggars and paupers who lived in the outskirts of the town. Scarcely a family left his presence "without some tears, or seemingly serious promises of a serious life."

6. Some of the poor people became so versed in theological questions as "competently to understand the body of divinity," and were able to judge in difficult controversies. "Some of them were so able in prayer, that very few ministers did match them in order and fulness, and apt expressions, and holy oratory, with fervency."—"The temper of their minds, and the innocence of their lives, was much more laudable than their parts."

7. The lectures which he preached in his itinerant efforts at Worcester, Clebury, Shiffnall, and especially Dudley, gave him great encouragement. At Dudley he says, "the poor nailers and labourers would not only crowd the church as full as ever I had seen in London, but would also hang on the windows and leads without."

8. His success among his ministerial brethren was as great as among private Christians. Their meetings were "never conten-

tious, but always comfortable." "We took," he says, "great delight in the company of each other, so that I know that the remembrance of those days is pleasant both to them and me."—"When I attempted to bring them all conjunctly to the work of catechizing and instructing every family by itself, I found a ready consent in most, and performance in many."

9. As Baxter became a model Pastor, the church at Kidderminster became a model Church to the surrounding congregations. "The zeal and knowledge of this poor people," he says, "provoked many in other parts of the land. And though I have been absent from them now six years, and they have been assaulted with pulpit calumnies, and slanders, with threatenings and imprisonments, with enticing words and seducing reasonings, they yet stand fast, and keep to their integrity. Many of them are gone to God, and some are removed, and some are now in prison, and most still at home; but not one that I hear of are fallen off, or forsake their uprightness."

It would be wrong to close this account of Baxter's success without stating the devout feelings with which he recorded it. "I must here, to the praise of my dear Redeemer, set up this pillar of remembrance, even to his praise, who hath employed me so many years in so comfortable a work, with such encouraging success! O what am I, a worthless worm, not only wanting academical honours, but much of that furniture which is needful to so high a work, that God should thus abundantly encourage me, when the reverend instructors of my youth did labour fifty years together in one place, and could scarcely say that they had converted one or two of their parishes! And the greater was this mercy, because I was naturally of a discouraged spirit; so that if I had preached one year, and seen no fruit of it, I should hardly have forborne running away like Jonah, but should have thought God had not called me to that place."

III.—BAXTER'S ADVANTAGES.

In surveying the wonderful success of Baxter, and in wishing to adopt his plans of usefulness, many young ministers would be glad to know what were the peculiar advantages of his position which contributed to the efficiency of his ministry. He himself has recorded thirty of these advantages, which will now be presented in his own arrangement, and, for distinctness' sake, in his own enumeration.

1. His going to a people who were not previously hardened by the Gospel.—"I came to a people that never had any awakening mi-

nistry before, but a few formal cold sermons of the curate. If they had been hardened under a powerful ministry, and been sermon proof, I should have expected less." This language was occasioned by his bitter remembrance of Bridgenorth.

2. His affectionate and serious style of preaching.—"I was in the vigour of my spirits, and had naturally a familiar moving voice, which is a great matter with the common hearers; and doing all in bodily weakness as a dying man to dying men." "It must be serious preaching which must make men serious in hearing and obeying it."

3. The removal and disappearance of the profane rabble out of the town.—"Those who had risen in tumult against me at first, and who were the enemies of all godliness in the town, went, from the very hatred of the Puritans, to the wars, and perished in battle."

4. Freedom of conscience and liberty of prophesying under the reign of Cromwell.—Baxter himself bears testimony that the success of the Parliament in the civil wars "removed many and great impediments to men's salvation." Somewhere between the niches allotted for Charles the First and Charles the Second, in the New Houses of Parliament, where, as an insult to the civil and religious liberties of England, a statue was denied Cromwell, a tablet should be placed bearing in letters of gold the following testimony of Baxter:—"Though Cromwell gave liberty to all sects among us, and did not set up any party alone by force, yet this much, gave abundant advantage to the Gospel [viz.], removing the prejudices and the terrors that hindered it; especially considering that godliness had countenance, and reputation also, as well as liberty." "For my part, I bless God who gave me, even under an usurper whom I opposed, such liberty and advantage to preach his Gospel with success, which I cannot have under a King to whom I have sworn and performed subjection and obedience; yea [liberty and advantage] which no age, since the Gospel came into this land, did before possess, as far as I can learn from history."

5. The esteem and veneration in which he was personally held by all.—"It is almost certain that the gratefulness of the person doth ingratiate the message, and greatly prepares the people to receive the truth. Had they taken me to be ignorant, erroneous, scandalous, worldly, self-seeking, &c., I could have expected small success."

6. The co-operation and zeal of his people.—These "thirsted for the salvation of their neighbours, and were, in private, my assistants; and being dispersed through the town, were ready, in almost all companies, to repress seducing words, and to justify godliness, to convince, reprove, and exhort men according to their needs; as also, to teach them how to pray."

7. The consistent lives of the members of his church.—“The malicious people could not say, ‘Your professors here are as proud and covetous as any.’ The blameless lives of godly people did shame opposers.”

8. The absence of sectarian bigotry in the town.—“We had no private church, though we had private meetings. We had not pastor against pastor, nor church against church, nor sect against sect, nor Christian against Christian.”

10. The private meetings which he held with religious people.—These were meetings for religious conversation, and for the friendly discussion of some important point of doctrine. “Here I had an opportunity to know their case; for if any were touched and awakened in public, I should presently see him drop into our private meetings.”

11. The diligence and laboriousness of his ministerial assistants. These deserve honourable mention; they were successively Mr Richard Sergeant and Mr Humphrey Waldern. In speaking of Mr Sergeant, he says,—“No child ever seemed more humble. No interest of his own, either of estate or reputation, did ever seem to stop him in his duty. No labour did he ever refuse which I could put him to. When I put him to travel over the parish, which is nearly twenty miles about, from house to house, to catechize and instruct each family, he never grudged or seemed once unwilling. He preached at a chapel above two miles off one-half the day, and in the town the other, and never murmured;” “Mr Humphrey Waldern was very much like him.”

12. The countenance of the magistrates of the place. “A bailiff and a justice were annually chosen in the corporation, who ordinarily were godly men, and always such as would be thought so; and were ready to use their authority to suppress sin and promote godliness.” This was in perfect keeping with Baxter's views on the authority of the magistrate in religion; though it would be disputed by most Independents.

13. His generous liberality to the poor. The living was thought to be worth L.200 per annum, but only L.90, and sometimes only L.80 came to Baxter. His published works brought him in sometimes L.60, and sometimes L.80 per annum. Some of the cleverest children he sent to the universities, “where, for L.8 a-year, or L.10 at most, by the help of my friends there, I maintained them.” “Some of them are honest ministers, now cast out with their brethren.” “In giving what little I had, I did not inquire whether they were good or bad, if they asked relief: For the bad had souls and bodies that needed charity most. And this truth I will speak to the encouragement of the charitable, that what little money I have now by me, I got it almost all, I scarce know how,

in that time when I gave most. And since I have had less opportunity of giving, I have had less increase."

14. The free distribution and circulation of his practical writings among the inhabitants. Of all his smaller publications he presented a copy to each family among his people, "which came to about eight hundred."

15. The facilities for reading afforded by the particular trade of the town. In those days hand-loomers allowed the people "time enough to read, and to talk of holy things;" but the wheels and spindles of power looms are not so accommodating. "The town liveth upon the weaving of Kidderminster stuffs, and as they stand in their loom, they can set a book before them, or edifie one another." "And their constant converse and traffic with London doth much promote civility and piety among tradesmen."

16. His single life. "For I could the easilier take my people for my children; and being discharged from the most of family cares, keeping but one servant, had the greater vacancy and liberty for the labours of my calling."

17. His practice of physic. He found that "they that cared not for their souls did love their lives, and care for their bodies." "Sometimes I could see before me in the church a very considerable part of the congregation, whose lives God had made me a means to save, or to recover their health. And doing it for nothing so obliged them, that they would readily hear me."

18. The influence of his young converts upon their relations. In the town there were few irreligious families "but some of their own relations were converted. Many children did God work upon at fourteen, fifteen, or sixteen years of age; and this did marvellously reconcile the minds of the parents, and elder sort to godliness. They that would not hear me would hear their own children." "We had some old persons of near eighty years of age who are, I hope, in heaven; and the conversion of their own children was the chief means to overcome their prejudice, and old customs and conceits."

19. Afflictions in families. "Though sick-bed promises are usually soon forgotten; yet was it otherwise with many among us. And as soon as they were recovered, they first came to our private meetings, and so kept in a learning state, till further fruits of piety appeared."

20. His bearing a public testimony against the iniquity of the times. Here he refers to Cromwell's army marching against the Parliament—to the execution of Charles I.—to the invasion of Scotland, &c., and says, "Had I owned the guilt of others, it would have been my shame, and the hindrance of my work, and provoked God to have disowned me." In his view, pulpit protests against iniquitous governments were not likely to injure ministerial usefulness.

21. The character of the ministers around him. "Their preaching was powerful and sober; their spirits peaceable and meek; disowning the treasons and iniquities of the times, as well as we. They were wholly addicted to the winning of souls: adhering to no faction, neither episcopal, presbyterian, or independent, as to parties, but desiring union, and loving that which is good in all. These, meeting weekly at our lecture (in Kidderminster), and monthly at our disputation, constrained a reverence in the people to their worth and unity, and consequently furthered my work."

22. The reproach and ridicule which intemperance brought upon itself. "There were two drunkards almost at the next doors to me, who, one by night, and the other by day, did constantly every week, if not twice or thrice a-week, roar and rave in the street like stark madmen. These were so beastly and ridiculous that they made that sin, of which we were in most danger, the more abhorred."

23. The character and the fate of apostates and backsliders in the neighbourhood. "They that fell off were such as, before, by their want of grounded understanding, humility, and mortification, gave us the greatest suspicion of their stability." "As they fell from the faith, so they fell to drinking, gaming, furious passions, horribly abusing their wives, &c.—and so to a vicious life. So that they stood up as pillars of God's justice to warn others."

24. The closeness of his appeals in his pastoral visits. In these visits he had "personal conference with every family apart, and catechising and instructing them. That which was spoken to them personally, awakened more attention, and was easier applied than public preaching, and seemed to do much more upon them."

25. The firm maintenance of Church discipline among the members of his congregation. His system of discipline was somewhat doubtful for a parish Presbyterian, but the advantages of it to his ministry were the following, as stated by himself. (1.) "We performed a plain command of Christ, and we took obedience to be better than sacrifice. (2.) We kept the church from irregular separations, &c: (3.) We helped to cure that dangerous disease among the people, of imagining that Christianity is but a matter of opinion and dead belief; and to convince them how much it consisteth in holiness, &c. (4.) We greatly suppressed the practice of sin, and caused people to walk more watchfully than else they would have done."

26. The wise adaptation of his ministry to the circumstances of his hearers. This he did, he says, "by ordering my doctrine to them in a suitableness to the main end, and yet so as might suit their dispositions and diseases. The thing which I daily opened to them, and, with the greatest importunity, laboured to imprint on their minds, was the great fundamental principles of Christianity

contained in their baptismal covenant."—"Yet I did usually put in something in my sermon, which was above their own discovery, and which they had not known before; and this I did that they might be kept humble, and still perceive their ignorance, and be willing to be kept in a learning state."

27. The absence of wealthy men in his church. "My people were not rich."—"There were none of the tradesmen very rich, seeing their trade was poor, that would but find them food and raiment. The magistrates of the town were, few of them, worth L.40 per annum, and most not half so much. Three or four of the richest thriving masters of the trade got about L.500 or L.600 in twenty-years, and it may be lose L.100 of it at once by an ill debtor. The generality of the master workmen lived but a little better than their journeymen, from hand to mouth."—"It is the poor that receive the glad tidings of the gospel, and that are usually rich in faith. As Mr George Herbert saith in his Church Militant—

‘Gold and the gospel never did agree,
Religion always sides with poverty.’”

28. His abstaining from all money agitations with his people. He avoided "meddling with tithes and worldly business, whereby I had my whole time, except what sickness deprived me of, for my duty, and my mind more free from entanglements, than else it would have been. And also I escaped the offending of the people. And I found also that nature itself being conscious of the baseness of its earthly disposition, doth think basely of those whom it discerneth to be earthly."—As an instance of his indifference to money, he gives the following racy account of his domestic life, while a bachelor. "In my family, I had the help of my father, and mother-in-law, and the benefit of a godly, understanding, faithful servant, an ancient woman, near sixty years old, who eased me of all care, and laid out all my money for house-keeping, so that I never had one hour's trouble about it, nor ever took one day's account of her for fourteen years together, as being certain of her fidelity, providence, and skill."

29. His continuing his ministry so long in one place. He was at Kidderminster "near two years before the war, and fourteen after."—"He that removeth oft from place to place may sow good seed in many places, but is not like to see much fruit in any, unless some other skilful hand shall follow him to water it. It was a great advantage to me to have all the religious people of the place of my own instructing and informing; and that I stayed to see them grown up to some confirmedness and maturity."

30. His itinerant labours in the surrounding towns and villages.

Baxter and his brethren had a regular system of itinerancy for the county. In speaking of these country lectures, he says—"To divers of them I went as oft as I was able, and the neighbour ministers oftener than I."—"This business also we contrived to be universally and regularly managed; for, besides the lectures set up on week days fixedly in several places, we studied how to have it extended to every place in the county that had need. This lecture did a great deal of good; and we continued it voluntarily till the ministers were turned out, and all these works went down together."

This concise but well-defined outline of Baxter's labours and usefulness contains nothing singular in the advantages of his position,—nothing novel or extravagant in the machinery of his means. His plans were simple, and his advantages were almost common to every faithful pastor; but his success is extraordinary, and its influence is yet telling throughout England and the Protestant world. The efficiency of his plans is found in his own masculine mind, and manly piety, baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. His machinery was plain, but every wheel and pin in it was of the best gold; was all worked by a living and indefatigable heart, and that heart moved by the Holy Ghost. He mentions thirty advantages which contributed to his success: but one more might have been added to his enumeration, which perhaps his holy modesty prevented him from recording,—and that, the thirty-first, was his preaching talents. He was an effective preacher, as well as an efficient pastor. Under the heads 3 and 26 he makes allusions to his preaching, such as his "familiar moving voice," his "dealing in fundamentals," &c.; but they are mere allusions, which give us no full conception of Baxter in the pulpit. His works are the best index to his preaching, for he delivered from the pulpit the greater part of his practical publications; and he says, that, except when diseased or idle, he wrote out all his sermons, and read them as they were written. His printed sermons demonstrate that his discourses were distinguished for three great principles of effective preaching—simplicity of style, directness of purpose, and earnestness of manner.

Baxter's own immortal lines will explain the simplicity of his style in the pulpit—

"I preached, as never sure to preach again,
And as a dying man to dying men."

His language was sound, chaste, and vigorous Saxon, used without the Latin idioms of Owen, or the majestic negligence of Howe. He preached Christ crucified in a crucified style, without ever di-

verting his hearers by extravagance, or offending them by coarseness. He never ranged over poetical fields to cull flowers for his sermons. All his flowers, and many of them are of the loveliest and freshest hues, grew out of his subject; and there he let them stand, because they were either medicinal, or nourishing, to his hearers, as well as beautiful to their sight. He preached as feeling that the truths of God were too great and too glorious in themselves to be covered up with the little trappings of human adornments. He would as soon have thought of hanging the rainbow with corals, as of dressing the cross of Christ with tinsel. His eloquence consisted in fit thoughts, and not in rounded sentences. Consummate and ready dialectician as he was, he very rarely or never introduced metaphysics into his sermons. Sometimes indeed, as has been recorded, he would say something profound or abstruse, just to convince his hearers that his plain preaching and his simple style were not to be traced either to a feeble intellect, or to superficial knowledge; still he was never a metaphysical essayist in the pulpit. He never preached a sermon to display his scholastic learning, or his powers of logic; but his aim was ever to win souls to Christ. If fine and elegant sermons are tolerable at all, it is in the press only, when they are to be read as discussions of a subject, and read either as an intellectual exercise or as a discipline of conscience. In the pulpit splendid sermons are splendid sins. They dazzle, and amuse, and astonish, like brilliant fire-works, but they throw daylight on no subject. They draw attention to the preacher, instead of to the gospel. The splendid preacher, like the Pyrotechnist, calculates on a dark night among his attendants; and amid the corruscations of the pulpit, his skill and his art are admired and applauded, but Christ is not glorified. If angels weep and devils mock, it is at the pulpit door of a splendid preacher.

His sermons are all distinguished for directness of purpose, and singleness of aim. He neither preached about his hearers nor at them, but to them. Even when recording his having preached at court in the days of the Commonwealth, he says that he "preached to Cromwell," and not before him. Neither did he preach above or beside his audience; but they, like the hearers of our Lord, "perceived that he meant them." It was the boast of the Benjamites that they could shoot their arrows at an object to the breadth of a hair; but it seems the pride of many pulpit-archers that they can shoot many degrees above their targets. In their pulpit parades their shafts are polished, but they pierce none. The plaudits of the archer are loud and long; but, after the whole quiver is exhausted, no groans of the wounded are heard, crying for relief and life. In the ministry, every honest preacher must aim at success; and he must never misinterpret the scripture narrative of a certain man who drew

an arrow at a venture, to justify desultory sermons or aimless preaching. All Baxter's sermons have a given and intelligible aim, which stood distinctly and prominently before his eye, and that was the heart or the conscience. He aimed at producing impression, and producing while he was yet speaking; he, therefore, never sent his hearers home to decide, but always insisted on "Now or never."

In preaching, Baxter's heart burnt within him; and while he was speaking, a live coal from the altar fired his sermon with seraphic fervour. Into his pulpit he brought all the energies and sympathies of his entire nature. He had a large mind, an accute intellect, a melting heart, a holy soul, a kindling eye, and a "moving voice"—and he called on all that was within him to aid him in his preaching. Being deeply earnest himself, he wished his hearers to be deeply earnest. Himself being a burning light, he wished to flash the hallowed fire into the hearts of others. He seems never to have studied action or "the start theatric." The only teacher that gave him lessons in action and attitude was feeling—real, genuine, holy feeling: and this taught him how to look, how to move, and how to speak. In preaching, as well as in every thing religious, he believed with Paul, that "it is good to be always zealously affected;" and, consequently, that earnest fervid preaching is truly apostolic. Would God that there had been in the church of Christ a real uninterrupted succession in the fervour of apostolic preaching, and that the mantle of apostolic Elijahs had been taken up by succeeding Elishas, and by men like Apollos, "an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scripture, who being fervent in spirit, spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord." The modern mode of preaching is more like Joseph's coat of many colours, than like Elijah's mantle, which raised the dead—it has never descended from a chariot of fire, and it is so flimsy, that it gives neither heat nor warmth even to the preacher himself.

Hear Baxter's own heart-stirring thoughts on the best style of preaching.* "How few ministers do preach with all their might? Or speak about everlasting joy or torment, in such a manner as to make men believe that they are in good sadness. It would make a man's heart ache to see a company of dead and drowsy sinners sit under a minister, and not have a word that is like to quicken or awaken them. To think with ourselves, *O if these sinners were but convinced and awakened, they might yet be converted and live.* And alas! we speak so drowsily or gently, that sleepy sinners cannot hear. The blow falls so light, that hard-hearted persons cannot feel it. Most ministers will not so much as put out their voice and

* Reformed Pastor, Chap. iv. Sect. 6.

stir up themselves to an earnest utterance. But if they do speak out loud and earnestly, how few do answer it with earnestness of matter? and then the voice doth but little good: the people will take it but for mere bawling, when the matter doth not correspond. It would grieve me to hear what excellent doctrines some ministers have in hand, and let it die in their hands, for want of close and lively application. What fit matter they have for convincing sinners, and how little they make of it; and what a deal of good it might do, if it were sent home; and yet they cannot or will not do it. Oh sirs! how plain, how close, and earnestly should we deliver a message of such a nature as ours is? When the everlasting life or death of men is concerned in it, methinks we are no where so wanting as in this seriousness. There is nothing more unsuitable to such a business than to be slight and dull. What! speak coldly for God! and for men's salvation! Can we believe that our people must be converted or condemned, and yet can we speak in a drowsy tone! In the name of God, brethren, labour to awaken your hearts before you come; and when you are in the work, that you may be fit to awaken the hearts of sinners. Remember that they must be awakened or damned; and a sleepy preacher will hardly awake them."

CHAPTER III.

BAXTER'S THEOLOGY.

IN writing an essay on Baxter, it would be as wrong to omit his Theology, as it would be to omit philosophy in an essay on Bacon, or epic poetry in one on Milton. It was his theology that brought upon him assaults and onslaughts from all sects and divisions of the militant church in his own age. It is on account of his theology that a deep, strong, and general prejudice is cherished and expressed to this day. In fact, it is his theology that constitutes his individuality in History. By *Baxter*, every divine means Baxter's theology. As by Melancthon, one means the "*Communes Loci*;" and by Calvin, the "*Institutes*;" so by Baxter, the theological reader means "*the Aphorisms on Justification*," and the devotional reader means, "*the Saint's Rest*," or "*the Reformed Pastor*."

It is not likely that this volume will come into the hands of any one reader who has not some lurking and undefined prejudice against Baxter, and that solely on account of his theology. To render this volume, therefore, useful to such a reader, it is necessary that some notice should be taken of Baxter's Theology.

In theological science Baxter was a THINKER. He did not satisfy himself with reading and collecting the thoughts of other divines, but he thought out their thoughts, and he digested their master doctrines, until they gave him strength and stature, and became part and parcel of his own gigantic mind. Some minds, like the bookworm, penetrate through musty volumes and ponderous tomes; and in their progress they devour syllables, words, and even whole sentences, but they themselves do not grow one cubit in thought. A living, thinking mind is not so. Whenever the thoughts of others get a lodgement in a healthy mind, as seed in a fertile soil, they produce other thoughts, and these thoughts are that mind's own thoughts, its own produce, and its own seed for a further harvest. This was the case with Baxter. He roamed through the varied domains of thought, and schoolmen, and divines, and collected the thoughts of others more exclusively and successfully, perhaps, than any theologian of his age:—but he had also thoughts of his own, thoughts which had all the vigour and raciness of the Baxterian mind, and these thoughts he worked out with a power, and independency, and a courage, which entitle him to all the distinction of an original Theologian.

In the breadth and the depth of theology as a science, Baxter had no divine of his age that surpassed him: perhaps the truth would warrant the assertion, that in breadth and depth, he had none equal to him. USHER was probably equal to him in the depth of theological dogmatics, and surpassed him in general knowledge. JEREMY TAYLOR was equal to him in the breadth of scholastic literature, and surpassed him in the brilliancy of amassed thoughts. But in both length and breadth, neither of them surpassed him; for every theological reader will allow that Baxter is more profound than Taylor, and more comprehensive than Usher. Among the Nonconformists, also, there were many who excelled him in some things; as Owen in Greek exegesis, Howe in loftiness of thought, Goodwin in evangelical savour, and Flavel, in gentle sweetness; but none of them equalled him in all.

His only real rival among the Nonconformists was Dr Owen; and it is a fact that, among religious parties two centuries ago, and among the evangelical readers of our own day, Owen was, and has been, a far greater favourite than Baxter. One of the most remarkable circumstances in this fact is that, even with Arminian divines, the Calvinistic Owen is in far greater acceptance than the eclectic Baxter. The reason is, that Owen studied the Christology of Redemption more than Baxter; and Baxter studied the Anthropology of salvation more than Owen. Owen exhibits with much richness and amplitude what Christ did for the redemption of man. Baxter takes all this for granted, and, taking his position at the

cross of Christ, addresses a "Call to the Unconverted;" and explains and enforces the obligations of redeemed man to believe the testimony of God concerning his Son. The cold reception of Baxter, and the warm acceptableness of Owen, therefore, with Arminian divines, are curious phenomena in the philosophy of theological parties. Arminians have forgiven Owen's "limited redemption," on account of his "Glory of Christ," and "Communion with God;" but they have never forgiven Baxter's "Personal Election," for the sake of his "General Redemption," and his "Saint's Everlasting Rest."

The violent unkindness with which Baxter's theology was treated by the divines of his own age, and of his own communion, is not peculiar to his contemporaries: it is the fate of theological enterprise in all ages. He seems to have suffered as much of odium and annoyance from his brethren on account of his doctrinal theology, as he suffered of reproach and persecution from the Episcopalian Royalists, on account of his ecclesiastical politics. Some indeed who disliked his theology, opposed it with honesty and plain speaking, chastened by kindness. Such were BLAKE, of Tamworth, in a postscript attached to his "Covenant Sealed;" BURGESS, of Sutton Coldfield, in his "True Doctrine of Justification," and GEORGE LAWSON, the able author of "Theopolitica," a work whose merit has never yet been appreciated by the theological student. Other opponents treated him with harshness and insulting severity. Such were KENDALL in his work on "Perseverance;" EYRE, of Salisbury, in his "Treatise on Justification;" CRANDON, of Fawley, in his "Baxter's Aphorisms excoriated and authorized;" and especially by Thomas Edwards, in his "Baxterianism Barefaced." Nor is Dr Owen to be left out of this last enumeration, as is evident from the close of his tract "On the Death of Christ," &c. attached to his "Vindiciæ Evangelicæ." The theological character of all his opponents is given by Baxter with one stroke of his pen. "The animadvertisers," he says, "were of several minds; and what one approved, the other confuted, being farther from each other than any of them were from me."

To theologians of any class, it is a great dishonour; but to Protestant theologians, whose very existence is a standing protest against intellectual slavery, it is a flagrant shame, that they should cherish in themselves, and promote in each other, a disposition to decry any spirit that appears among them claiming the right of thinking with his own mind, seeing with his own eyes, and speaking with his own lips. Why should they act thus? The God of mind, like the God of nature, is the God of variety. In variety there must necessarily be a series and a collection of individualities; for where there is no distinctive individuality, there can be no variety, but

only uniformity. To every germ of life "God hath given it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed its own body; and every flesh is not the same flesh." In like manner, to every rational being, "God giveth it a mind and mental powers as it hath pleased him; and to every mind its own form, and its own mode of producing thought; and all thought is not the same thought." Why, then, should theologians wish to destroy this beautiful variety in the intellectual system? Who has given them authority to interfere with this variety? Who are they themselves who claim this right to interfere? Have they any divine right to differ from a man like Baxter, which a man like Baxter has not to differ from them? Are not they themselves, as well described above, farther from each other, than any of them are from him?

It is unlovely to see thinking men trying to murder every fresh produce of thought. It is unmanly and ungenerous to attempt to quench a man's reason by wounding his feelings. It is the meanness of dastard imbecility to try to check the progress of his doctrine by Parthian javelins at his official position or his professional reputation. Yet this is the *odium theologicum*. If men, in the affairs of every-day life, are to exercise forbearance towards each other because they are in the flesh; the same forbearance is incumbent on theologians towards their brethren in intellectual struggles, since they themselves see but in a glass darkly. The men who are known in ecclesiastical history as heretics, would probably have never proceeded to the extreme errors with which their names are associated, had it not been for the intellectual tyranny, and the dogmatic despotism, of their contemporary theologians. Had a little intellectual liberty been allowed to the inquiring spirit, and had the new thinker been treated with gentle concern and affectionate warning, instead of with reserve, rudeness, and barbarity, the powerful mind would have been preserved to the church and to the interests of truth. Spontaneous thoughts and doctrines are tender and vital matters to a thinking mind. When, therefore, any luxuriant thoughts which may sprout from the vigorous roots of a healthy mind are wrenched off by the hand of a ruthless orthodoxy, the heart's blood will respond to the barbarity, and as in the tree of Virgil,

— "Quæ prima solo ruptis radicibus arbos
Vellitur, huic atro liquuntur sanguine guttæ,
Et terram tabo maculant."

One is tempted to ask, which is the most unchristian and most dangerous to Christianity—the freedom of speculation which proves all things that it may hold the more fast that which is good; or the ungenerous, illiberal, and persecuting spirit with which the

opponents treat the author of that speculation? Yet, the inquirer is suspected, and the bigot is canonized. Why, in the very temple of truth itself, God still speaks "in divers manners:" yea, in the very tones of truth, we are to expect harmony, but not unison. The discussion of truth and the agitation of doctrines have always resulted in good to the Church, and to the world. Even the waters of Bethesda, in the very house of Mercy itself, needed to be agitated and disturbed to renew their healing power. It is, therefore, unseemly in theologians, that when some "Doctor Angelicus" descends among them, and agitates the settled waters of their dull and stagnant orthodoxy, then always "a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, and withered," creep from the "five points" of their "five porches" to brandish their crutches against the intruder, or to mutter their anathemas against the innovation, instead of welcoming the benignant visitor, sharing in the healthiness of the agitation, and becoming healed of whatsoever disease they had. Such an angel was Baxter, and such was the treatment of his wholesome and healing agitation of the waters of orthodoxy; and such will always be the treatment of theological agitations until intellectual liberty become an acknowledged law in the republic of literature.

Baxterianism was treated in the eighteenth century much as Baxter himself was treated by his contemporaries in the seventeenth. In the eighteenth century, ultra-Calvinism was rampant among the Baptist and Independent churches; and even in Episcopal churches, where there was Calvinism at all, it was inclined to ultraism, as may be instanced in Romaine and Toplady. This retreating from Baxterianism to the extreme borders of Calvinism may be accounted for by the pernicious influence which professed Baxterianism exerted on its avowed adherents. These professed disciples of Baxter gradually forsook the *via media* of their master, and travelled to Arminianism; and thence, after some progress through Arianism, became at last settlers in Socinianism. From a survey of these painful consequences, many sound Calvinists hated Baxterianism, and asked, "Can any good thing come from Kidderminster?" The result was, that a blind and blinding prejudice against Baxter prevailed every where in England, and especially in Scotland and Wales.

A startling instance of the force and extent of this bigotted prejudice is given in Mr Philip of Maberly's lively "Essay on the Genius, Works, and Times of Baxter," attached to Virtue's beautiful edition of "Baxter's Practical Works" in three volumes. A private gentleman, who was an elegant scholar and a good theologian, seeing the destructive influence of hyper-Calvinism upon personal piety, as well as upon theological science, resolved to try to soften

down the asperities of controversy by introducing among the controversialists the matured thoughts and strong arguments of some master-mind in Israel. Agreeably to this method, he contrived to take the public by guile, and he published the opinions of "an author of the seventeenth century."

"It is hardly credible," says Mr Philip, "but it is true, that so lately as the close of the last century, specimens of the best of Baxter's arguments on the great points at issue between Calvinists and Arminians, were brought before the public without his name, that they might be read without prejudice, and make their own impression, before the author could be discovered. This was done by ELI BATES, Esq., in a volume entitled, 'Observations on some important Points in Divinity, &c. &c., extracted from an author of the seventeenth century.' Even in the second edition of this volume, in 1811, Baxter's name is not given in the title-page, nor allowed to appear even in the preface. The fact is, Bates was too proud of Baxter's theology to peril it at once upon his name. He knew his peculiarities, and could not forget the odium they once excited."—"The dexterous bait took. Not a few Calvinists found out that there was an old and powerful writer whom the Arminians could not claim, and would not quote, for themselves, even although he fought their battle at some of its hottest points; and still more, Arminians discovered that Calvinism did not necessarily limit the call of the Gospel, nor subvert the free agency of man."

During the eighteenth century, the dissenting ministry in Britain were divided into Calvinists and Baxterians. Through the disrepute into which the Arians and others brought the name of Baxterianism, many divines, who were Baxterians in theological sentiments, renounced the name; and since the commencement of the nineteenth century, they have preferred being called "Moderate Calvinists." The moderate Calvinists of the present century are in fact only the Baxterians of the preceding age. This change in the name is owing to the influence of the writings of President Edwards, of Andrew Fuller, and of Dr Williams. The "Fullerism" of the sage of Kettering, and the "Modern Calvinism" of Dr Williams, would, in the eighteenth century, have been called Baxterianism. When the disciples of Baxter are called Baxterians, it is not meant that they ever formed a distinct sect, or separate party, in the Christian Church. Instead of being, like the Wesleyans for instance, formed into a distinct body, they were, and are, more like the friends of Arminius, scattered among different societies, and found among all communities. Though the denomination "Baxterian," as the badge of a theological party, is likely to become extinct, the party itself will always exist, as long as Arminianism will have any tendency to Pelagianism, and Calvinism have any bias towards Antinomianism.

BAXTER'S THEOLOGY.

This account of the treatment of Baxter and his Theology has probably excited the reader to wish to know what Baxterianism is.

Baxterianism is, in theology, what eclecticism is in philosophy. It is a method of philosophizing, and, if the word be allowed, of theologizing, which seizes upon theological truth, in whatever system that truth may be found; and which gathers and appropriates to itself every truth, simply because it is truth. The theology of Baxter is distinguished from others by four peculiarities,—by its method of systematizing the doctrines of Revelation; its adoption of universal Redemption in harmony with personal Election; its theory of Justification by faith; and its theoretical and practical assertion of the agency of man in conversion.

The method which Baxter adopted for systematizing the doctrines of theology may be called Triadism, or what he himself calls "Trichotomizing." The meaning is, that as all the works and dispensations of God are the productions of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, some vestigia Trinitatis, some evidences of triplicity, or some marks of triadism, may be expected to discover themselves in all the phenomena of the divine operations. Those who understand what Monadism was to Plato and Leibnitz, and what Tetractysm was to the Pythagoreans, will be prepared to comprehend what triadism was to Baxter. It is his starting point, the principle from which he sets out, the *πρῶτον πρῶτον*, the where-to-stand of Archimedes, or, what the German philosophers call his stand-punkt, his stand-point.

The whole of his Latin Body of Divinity called "*METHODUS THEOLOGICÆ*," is arranged according to this method. At the close of his "Counsels to Young Men," published in 1682, he gives the following account of his method of arrangement in the "*Methodus*." "It consists of seventy-three tables, or methodical schemes, pretending to a juster methodizing of Christian verities according to the matter and Scripture, than is yet extant; furnishing men with necessary distinctions on every subject; shewing that trinity in unity is imprinted on the whole creation, and [that] trichotomizing is the just distribution in naturals and morals." This trinal method was a decided favourite, it was almost a passion with him. He saw triadism every where. As in the Godhead he saw Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, so he perceived that in God's relations to the world, he was Creator, Ruler, and Benefactor,—in the soul of man he saw power, will, and intellect,—in the divine dispensations towards man, he saw nature, grace, and glory,—in salvation he saw the Father as Rector or Ruler, the Son as Redeemer, the Holy Spirit as Sanctifier,—and in the Grace of the Spirit he saw faith, hope, and charity.

To those who delight to watch some great mind at some important work, the practical application of this method to philosophy and

theology, must be as interesting as to see a painter plying his pencil and colours, or a sculptor his hammer and chisel. The perspicacity necessary for detecting the trinal "primalities" as they develop themselves in the phenomena of the universe, the skill to analyse them and place them in proper arrangement, and the extent of knowledge requisite to combine all these triads in one complete whole and one grand unity, demand an intellect that is quick, adroit, and comprehensive. The great drawback from the glory of the whole process is, that the effort is not so useful as it is clever and amusing. As an intellectual exercise on the plains of speculation, it is pleasing not only because it is playful, but because also it is a wholesome discipline in the gymnastics of mind. But, as a system of methodizing, it is so hypothetical, so conjectural, and sometimes so phantastic. But it is of no use either to practical religion or to theological science. The English reader will find how Baxter employs this method, in his "Catholick Theologie," printed in 1675, but presented more succinctly in his "End of Controversies," printed in 1691.

Baxter's doctrine of universal Redemption in harmony with personal Election, can scarcely be called Baxterianism. Yet as far as English theology is concerned, it is one of the most distinctive characteristics of Baxterianism. This doctrine was, in fact, the theology of the French Calvinists, especially of CAMEBO, AMYRALDUS, and DALLÆUS. Baxter seems to have read the works of the French divines thoroughly, and therefore, upon this subject, English Baxterianism is nothing but what might be called Amyraldism, or French Cameronianism. In his theory of Redemption, Baxter differed from most, if not from all of the Calvinistic theologians in England.

First, He asserted that the Atonement, or Satisfaction of Christ, did not consist in his suffering the identical punishment which was due to mankind from an offended law. This he expressed in the language of the schools, by saying that Christ did not suffer the *idem* threatened in the penalty, but the *tantundem*, or the equivalent. In plain English, the theory means, that the curses of the law were due to men for their sins,—that Christ became a substitute for men,—that the law could inflict no curse upon an innocent Substitute,—and that the Lord did not suffer the curses of the law, but answered "the end of the law," by suffering what would have the same effect in moral government, as if he had endured the identical punishment threatened.

Secondly, he asserts that Christ rendered this *tantundem*, or endured these equivalent sufferings, with the design of furnishing an honourable consideration, or safe ground, for proclaiming pardon

and offering salvation to every human being. This means that Christ died for sins and not for persons.

Thirdly, he asserts, that while the benefits of this substitutionary atonement are accessible and available to all men for their salvation, they have, in the divine appointment, a special reference to the subjects of personal election ; that is, Christ is an atoning Ransom, and is "the Saviour of all men, but specially of them that believe." This third assertion is the head and front of Baxter's offending. By admitting universal redemption, he offended the Calvinists ; and by admitting personal election, he offended the Arminians.

Had Baxter satisfied himself with admitting these two doctrines into his system without attempting to harmonize them, he would have acted the part of a humble believer, and of a philosophic theologian, and would besides have spared himself much polemic obloquy and persecution. Great faith is believing a great truth. He is greatest in faith who believes the greatest truths, and the greatest number of truths ; and he is complete in faith who believes all truth. Upon this principle, Baxter believed that he found the two truths, general redemption and personal election, in the Book of truth, and therefore he admitted them into his system of theology. And why not ? He was charged with admitting discrepancies and contradictions ; and the charge was apparently true. To this charge every believer is subject. Ninety-nine men out of a hundred believe what are called contradictions ; and the hundredth man is one who either doubts every thing, or examines nothing. These two principles are not contradictions because men call them so : they may, in the realities of the case, be verities in the most perfect harmony, though our faculties are not adequate to the task of reconciling them. The office of Reason, in reference to all truths presented to it, is to examine them and believe them. It is never called upon first to reconcile them, or, if it fail in that, then to reject them. In no portion of the Scripture does God enjoin upon his servants the obligation to harmonize his truths ; for that is his work, and not theirs : it is theirs to believe that he has harmonized them before they were revealed and announced.

Baxter attempted to reconcile these two doctrines by a theory much in vogue in his time, of Common Grace and Special Grace : but that theory was as inconsistent and contradictory as that of Universal Redemption and Special Salvation was supposed to be. That theory was, that if any man made a proper use of common Grace, God would then give him saving Grace. Baxter illustrates this with the metaphor of a house with two stories ; and says, that if man would use common Grace to come up the first flight of stairs, God would give him saving Grace to ascend the second flight, and

thus enter the higher department. He does not say what this common grace is, why it is called common ; nor does he distinguish it from what was afterwards called natural ability, which, as an element essential to accountableness, is a matter of Justice, and not of Grace. Indeed, the whole hypothesis seems to be proposed rather to justify the damnation of the sinner than to aid him in his salvation. It must therefore be confessed that Baxter, in his efforts at reconciliation, did not meet the question fairly and fully. His theory is, that all the elect *are sure* to be saved ; and that those who are non-elect *may be* saved, if they believe the Gospel. The question which he had to solve was this : Will any of the non-elect believe, and be actually saved ? This question he could not meet, because the Scriptures record no instance of such a circumstance.

This difficulty is produced, not by the evidence of the two truths, Universal Redemption and Personal Election, as independent doctrines, but by the attempt to reconcile them. The reasoning of Baxter, stripped of its scholastic form, would probably be embodied in the following statement : That the number of the finally saved, who will be at the right hand of Christ in the last day, is foreknown, and therefore fixed, is indisputable ; and that Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man, and for the sins, not of the elect only, but also for the sins of the whole world, and that the call to accept his salvation is sincerely addressed to all men, are equally indisputable : why then not admit both ? Theologians who believe in general Providence, believe also in special Providence. What is special Providence but the application of the principles and means of general Providence to special cases ? It is thus that "all things" in general Providence "work together for good," *specially* "to them that love God." In the same manner, a theologian may admit Universal Redemption and Special Redemption, since Special Redemption is only the application of the benefits and provisions of general redemption to special cases ; it is Christ being generally the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe.

In fine, Baxter believed that a certain and fixed number of saved men was determined in the decree about Redemption, without any reference to their faith as the ground of their election. Here he was a decided Calvinist of the Dordt School. He also believed that the divine decrees contemplate no Reprobation of any, but a universal redemption for all who will accept it, since Christ died for all. Here he was a decided Arminian. He admitted both doctrines to be true, and this gave to his theology the name of Baxterian.

A third distinctive peculiarity of Baxter's theology was his theory of Justification by Faith. His theory was, that in justification of

a sinner, it is not the righteousness of Christ that is imputed to him, but his own actual faith. In explaining his theory, it is necessary to state the hypothesis which he had to attack. The majority of the Calvinistic divines of his day believed in, what was called the imputation of Christ's active righteousness to the believer. It was presented in this manner. The law said "Do this and live." The sinner could not "do this" perfectly; therefore he must die. Jesus Christ "did this," or obeyed the law instead of the sinner, both as his substitute and as his representative, and therefore the law could not again say to the sinner "do this," since it had been done for him by his representative. In this theory the sinner is accounted as if he had obeyed the law, *i. e.* what Christ had done as his representative is accounted as having been done by himself, and therefore the law could not ask him twice. This opened a way direct to all the heights, moors, and bogs of Antinomianism; for the inference was unavoidable that, if Christ rendered to the law all the active obedience which was due to it from the believer, the law could not ask him for any more obedience; that is, Christ obeyed the law that the believer might not obey it. To hedge off this tremendous precipice some divines introduced the hypothesis of a distinction between the law as a Covenant of Works and as a Rule of Life, which they borrowed from COCCÆIUS.

To counteract the above opinions, Baxter sought to establish, in harmony with many of the Fathers, and of the divines of the Reformation, that, in justification, the active righteousness of Christ was not at all imputed, but only the faith of the believer in the Righteousness of Christ. In this statement he deemed himself firmly sustained by the express language of Scripture, and by the literal exegesis of the passages in which "faith" was found in connexion with "justification,"—*e. g.* Gen. xv. 6; Rom. iv. 3, 5, 9, 23-24. All these passages, he argued, shew that the doctrine of Paul was, that it was "faith," and not the active righteousness of Christ, that was imputed for justification. In opposition to this interpretation, Dr Owen and others argued, that by the word "faith" here, the Apostle meant the object of faith, *viz.* the righteousness of Christ. Baxter contended that such a gloss was against all honest exegesis of the passages, and against the logical argument of the Apostle. "If it be not faith indeed," he says, "that the Apostle meaneth, the context is so far from relieving our understandings, that it contributeth to our unavoidable deceit and ignorance. Read over the texts, and put but 'Christ's righteousness' every where instead of the 'faith,' and see what a scandalous paraphrase you will make." This was honest and manly dealing, and warranted by the context. As an example of this absurdity, read Rom. iv. 9, as Baxter suggests—"We say that the object of his faith, the righteousness of

Christ, was counted to him for righteousness." This "object of his faith could not be *his*, until it was imputed to him; but it is evident that he exercised *his* faith *before* the imputation. Besides, as if the Apostle wished to speak more explicitly, he says, in verse 22, that by "faith," he did not mean the "object of faith," but the act of "believing" in him, "who raised our Lord Jesus from the dead."

Faith is believing. Justifying faith is believing a justifying truth. God informed Abraham that all the nations of the earth should be blessed, *i. e.* pardoned and saved on account of his seed, the Messiah. Abraham witnessed this saving and justifying truth, and his believing it in the saving character of his Seed, was counted to him for righteousness, or a justifying faith. It was a proper, a just, and a right thing that Abraham should believe God's testimony concerning the Messiah, and therefore it was imputed to him as a right thing, or as a righteousness. The Owenian divines objected that in this shewing, faith was an act, and therefore a work, which would imply justification by works. And that such an act or work implied merit, and therefore did not, like the gospel justification, exclude boasting. It would be now too tedious to enter fully upon these objections. Let it suffice just to state that the objection is a play upon the word "work"—that believing in a substitute is no "work of law"—that faith is only an act of compliance with the gospel method of justification, and that no human being is ever conscious that there is any merit whatever in believing a true statement.

The fourth, and which was regarded by some as the most offensive peculiarity of Baxter's theology, was his doctrine that every sinner has a distinct agency of his own to exert in the process of his conversion. Among his works there is no separate treatise on human ability or free agency; but in all his works he either asserts or assumes that every man has power to do his duty. The most lengthened investigation of the difficulties of this question is found in his "Catholic Theologie," in the Dialogues on original sin, free will, and effectual grace. In "the Sixth day's Conference on natural corruption and impotency," he puts to his antagonist the following questions, which are all answered by being conceded.

1. Have not wicked men natural life? or are they dead?
2. Have they not natural powers or faculties for natural acts?
3. Is it not the same natural faculty of intellection by which we understand and believe things common and (things) spiritual? And the same natural faculty of *willing*, by which we love or will them both?
4. (This is about common grace).
5. Is there any nation or people in the world that are not obliged

by God to use some means towards their own conversion, and to forbear their sin?

6. Is there not such a thing in the world as a *true power* to do something that never is done, and forbear what is not forborne?

This puzzles the antagonist, but Baxter proceeds to demonstrate it: and then on "the Eleventh day's Conference" he rallies him and asks—"Would you not have your wife, children, and servants taught that it is their duty to love, honour, and obey you? and your neighbours to deal justly with you? and the rulers to protect you, and the judges to do you justice?"

The antagonist replies—"I speak only of religious, and not civil duties."

ANSWER. "You are indifferent, it seemeth, as to the interests of God's honour and man's salvation. Let those alone, so be it your *own* interest be secured. Duty to you must be preached, but not to God. But would you not have them taught to do you service as to the Lord, and as such as from him shall have punishment and reward? Should not all be done to the glory of God?"

All intellectual philosophers avow the doctrine that man has power to command his own attention; and no theologian can dispute it. This power to command his own attention, or "power over his own will," in man, is called, in doctrinal theology, "the self-determining power of the will." Baxter assumed this in all his writings, and in all his sermons, and especially in the two works embodied in this little volume.

The "Call to the Unconverted" takes for granted, in every page, that man "hath power over his own will." Indeed, no work has ever been written on conversion, and no work can be written on the subject, which does not imply that man acts voluntarily, whether in accepting or in rejecting the calls of the Gospel. The leading doctrines in the "Call to the Unconverted" are the following:—That the wicked must either turn and be converted, or perish,—that the wicked, whoever they are, shall be saved if they will only turn,—that God is pleased in their conversion, but displeased in their damnation,—that God is sincere in this pleasure, and has confirmed it by oath,—that God importunes men to be converted,—that he reasons with the wicked, and asks them to account for their non-conversion,—and that the blame of their being unconverted is not to be attached to any secret decree in God, but entirely to their own obstinacy.

It is true that his views of free-agency were not very clear or distinct; but the only thing that clouded them was the misty theory of common grace and saving grace. This is evident from the manner in which he meets the following objections to the wicked being called to turn:—

"OBJECT.—But we cannot convert ourselves till God convert us; we can do nothing without his grace. It is not in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth, but in God that sheweth mercy."

"ANS. 1.—God hath two degrees of mercy to shew; the mercy of conversion first, and the mercy of salvation last. The latter he will give to none but those that *will* and *run*, and hath promised to them only. The former is to make *them* willing that were unwilling; and though your own willingness and endeavours deserve not his grace, yet your wilful refusal deserveth that it should be denied you. Your disability is your very unwillingness itself, which excuseth not your sin, but maketh it the greater. You could turn, if you were but truly willing; and if your wills themselves were so corrupted that nothing but effectual grace will move them, you have the more cause to *seek* that grace, and *yield* to it, and *do* what you can in the use of means, and not neglect it, or set against it. Do what you are able first, and then complain of God for denying you grace, if you have cause."

"OBJECT.—But you seem to intimate all the while that man hath free-will."

"ANS.—The dispute about free-will is beyond your capacity. I shall therefore trouble you with no more but this about it. Your will is naturally a free, that is, a self-determining faculty; but it is viciously inclined, and backward to do good; but that is the wickedness of it which deserveth punishment."

Whatever may be our sentiments concerning Baxter's theory of human agency in conversion, it is evident that Dr Owen could not, on his principles, write a "Call to the Unconverted." This theory gave a character to Baxter's mind and to Baxter's preaching. It is probable that it was the very characteristic that arrested the attention of Archbishop Usher, who suggested to him his adaptation to write works of this description. In the preface he gives a detailed account of Usher's conversation with him on the importance of producing such a work. The work was not commenced till after the death of the venerated Archbishop, and was published on December 11, 1657. It is introduced by a very serious address "to all unsanctified persons who shall read this book, especially my hearers in the parish of Kidderminster." Of its remarkable and extensive usefulness, he gives the following account:—

"God hath blessed it with unexpected success beyond all the rest that I have written, except the 'Saint's Rest.' In a little more than a year, there were about twenty thousand of them printed by my own consent, and about ten thousand since, besides many thousands by stolen impressions, which poor men stole for lucre's sake. Through God's mercy, I have had information of almost whole households converted by this small book, which I set so light

by : and, as if all this in England, Scotland, and Ireland, were not mercy enough to me, God since I was silenced, hath sent it over on his message to many beyond the seas. For when Mr Elliot had printed all the Bible in the Indian's language, he next translated this my 'Call to the Unconverted.' * * * Mr Stoop, the pastor of the French church in London, being driven hence by the displeasure of his superiors, was pleased to translate it into elegant French, and print it in a very curious letter : and I hope it will not be unprofitable there, nor in Germany, where it is printed in Dutch."

Since the death of Baxter it has been translated into almost all the European languages, and has gone through very numerous and very large editions, both in England and in America. The instances of its usefulness, known and unknown, are a number which no man can number.

The other work contained in this volume is written on the same theological principles as the "Call to the Unconverted," and is intitled, "Making light of Christ." This latter work is the substance of a sermon preached at St Lawrence, Jewry, where the Rev. Mr Vines was pastor. The brief history of this sermon supplies an index to the great popularity of Baxter as a preacher. When he had to preach this sermon at St Lawrence, Jewry, he sent word to Mr Vines to secure seats or pews for Lord Broghill and the Earl of Suffolk, "with whom he was to go in the coach." "Yet," he says, "when I came, the crowd had so little respect to persons, that they (the said Lords) were fain to go home again, because they could not come within hearing. The old Earl of Warwick, who stood in the lobby, brought me home again. And Mr Vines himself was fain to get up into the pulpit, and sit behind me, and I stood between his legs : which I mention, that the reader may understand that verse in my poem concerning him, which is printed, where I say, that 'at once one pulpit held us both.'"

The full title of the sermon is, "The Causes and Danger of slighting Christ and his Gospel : or, Eternal Salvation made Light by multitudes to whom it is freely offered." It was first preached at Kidderminster, and afterwards in London. The whole discourse abounds with solemn and stirring passages. To his readers he says in the preface—"Should you but seriously read, and well consider as you read, till your heart be sensible what a sin it is to make light of Christ and his salvation, and till the Lord that bought you be advanced in the esteem and affections of your soul,—this will fulfil my desires." In these desires the writer of this Essay, and the Editor and Publisher of these volumes of "The Puritan Divines," sincerely and devoutly join.

MAKING LIGHT OF CHRIST AND SALVATION,

TOO OFT

THE ISSUE OF GOSPEL INVITATIONS.

"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"—Heb. ii. 34.

TO THE READER.

READER,

BEING called on in London to preach, when I had no time to study, I was fain to preach some sermons that I had preached in the country a little before. This was one, which I preached at St Laurence, in the church where my reverend and faithful brother in Christ, Mr Richard Vines, is pastor: when I came home I was followed by such importunities by letters to print the sermon, that I have yielded thereunto, though I know not fully the ground of their desires. Seeing it must abroad, will the Lord but bless it to the cure of thy contempt of Christ and grace, how comfortable may the occasion prove to thee and me! It is the slighting of Christ and salvation, that undoes the world. O happy man if thou escape but this sin! Thousands do split their souls on this rock which they should build them on. Look into the world, among rich and poor, high and low, young and old, and see whether it appear not by the whole scope of their conversations that they set more by something else than Christ? And for all the proclamations of his grace in the gospel, and our common professing ourselves to be his disciples, and to believe the glorious things that he hath promised us in another world, whether it yet appear not by the deceitfulness of our service, by our heartless endeavours to obtain his kingdom, and by our busy and delightful following of the world, that the most who are called Christians do yet in their hearts make light of Christ; and if so, what wonder if they perish by their contempt? Wilt thou but soberly peruse this short discourse, and consider well as thou readest of its truth and weight, till thy heart be sen-

sible what a sin it is to make light of Christ and thy own salvation, and till the Lord that bought thee be advanced in the estimation and affections of thy soul, thou shalt hereby rejoice, and fulfil the desires of

Thy servant in the faith,

RICHARD BAXTER.

MAKING LIGHT OF CHRIST AND SALVATION,

TOO OFF

THE ISSUE OF GOSPEL INVITATIONS. •

“ But they made light of it.”—Matt. xxii. 5.

THE blessed Son of God, that thought it not enough to die for the world, but would himself also be the preacher of grace and salvation, doth comprise in this parable the sum of his gospel. By the king that is here said to make the marriage, is meant God the Father, that sent his Son into the world to cleanse them from their sins, and espouse them to himself. By his Son, for whom the marriage is made, is meant the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who took to his Godhead the nature of man, that he might be capable of being their Redeemer when they had lost themselves in sin. By the marriage is meant the conjunction of Christ to the soul of sinners, when he giveth up himself to them to be their Saviour, and they give up themselves to him as his redeemed ones, to be saved and ruled by him; the perfection of which marriage will be at the day of judgment, when the conjunction between the whole church and Christ shall be solemnized. The word here translated *marriage*, rather signifieth the marriage-feast; and the meaning is, that the world is invited by the gospel to come in and partake of Christ and salvation, which comprehendeth both pardon, justification, and right to salvation, and all other privileges

of the members of Christ. The invitation is God's offer of Christ and salvation in the gospel; the servants that invite them are the preachers of the gospel, who are sent forth by God to that end; the preparation for the feast there mentioned, is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and the enacting of a law of grace, and opening a way for revolting sinners to return to God. There is a mention of sending second messengers, because God useth not to take the first denial, but to exercise his patience till sinners are obstinate. The first persons invited are the Jews; upon their obstinate refusal they are sentenced to punishment: and the gentiles are invited, and not only invited, but by powerful preaching, and miracles, and effectual grace, compelled; that is, infallibly prevailed with to come in. The number of them is so great that the house is filled with guests: many come sincerely, not only looking at the pleasure of the feast, that is, at the pardon of sin, and deliverance from the wrath of God, but also at the honour of the marriage, that is, of the Redeemer, and their profession by giving up themselves to a holy conversation: but some come in only for the feast, that is, justification by Christ, having not the wedding-garment of sound resolution for obedience in their life, and looking only at themselves in believing, and not to the glory of their Redeemer; and these are sentenced to everlasting misery, and speed as ill as those that came not in at all; seeing a faith that will not work is but like that of the devil; and they that look to be pardoned and saved by it are mistaken, as James sheweth, chap. ii. 24.

The words of my text contain a narration of the ill entertainment that the gospel findeth with many to whom it is sent, even after a first and second invitation. They made light of it, and are taken up with other things. Though it be the Jews that were first guilty, they have too many followers among us gentiles to this day.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE PASSAGE.—For all the wonderful love and mercy that God hath manifested in giving his Son to be the Redeemer of the world, and which the Son hath manifested in redeeming them by his blood; for all his full

preparation by being a sufficient sacrifice for the sins of all ; for all his personal excellencies, and that full and glorious salvation that he hath procured ; and for all his free offers of these, and frequent and earnest invitation of sinners ; yet many do make light of all this, and prefer their worldly enjoyments before it. The ordinary treatment of all these offers, invitations, and benefits, is by contempt.

Not that all do so, or that all continue to do so, who were once guilty of it ; for God hath his chosen whom he will compel to come in. But till the Spirit of grace overpower the dead and obstinate hearts of men, they hear the gospel as a common story, and the great matters contained in it go not to the heart.

The method in which I shall handle this doctrine is this.

I. I shall shew you what it is that men make light of.

II. What this sin of making light of it is.

III. The cause of the sin.

IV. The use of the doctrine.

I. The thing that carnal hearers make light of is,

1. The doctrine of the gospel itself, which they hear regardlessly. 2. The benefits offered them therein : which are, 1. Christ himself. 2. The benefits which he giveth.

Concerning Christ himself, the gospel, 1. Declareth his person and nature, and the great things that he hath done and suffered for man ; his redeeming him from the wrath of God by his blood, and procuring a grant of salvation with himself. Furthermore, the same gospel maketh an offer of Christ to sinners, that if they will accept him on his easy and reasonable terms, he will be their Saviour, the Physician of their souls, their Husband, and their Head.

2. The benefits that he offereth them are these. 1. That with these blessed relations to him, himself and interest in him, they shall have the pardon of all their sins past, and be saved from God's wrath, and be set in a sure way of obtaining a pardon for all the sins that they shall commit hereafter, so they do but obey sincerely, and turn not again to the rebellion of their unregeneracy. 2. They shall have the Spirit to become their Guide and Sanctifier, and to dwell

in their souls, and help them against their enemies, and conform them more and more to his image, and heal their diseases, and bring them back to God. 3. They shall have right to everlasting glory when this life is ended, and shall be raised up thereto at the last; besides many excellent privileges in the way, in means, preservation, and provision, and the foretaste of what they shall enjoy hereafter: all these benefits the gospel offereth to them that will have Christ on his reasonable terms. The sum of all is in 1 John v. 11, 12, "This is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son: he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life."

II. What this sin of the making light of the gospel is.

1. To make light of the gospel is to take no great heed to what is spoken, as if it were not a certain truth, or else were a matter that little concerned them; or as if God had not written these things for them. 2. When the gospel doth not affect men, or go to their hearts; but though they seem to attend to what is said, yet men are not awakened by it from their security, nor doth it work in any measure such holy passion in their souls, as matters of such everlasting consequence should do: this is making light of the gospel of salvation. When we tell men what Christ hath done and suffered for their souls, and it scarce moveth them: we tell them of keen and cutting truths, but nothing will pierce them: we can make them hear, but we cannot make them feel; our words take up in the porch of their ears and fancies, but will not enter into the inward parts; as if we spake to men that had no hearts or feeling: this is a making light of Christ and salvation. Acts xxviii. 26, 27, "Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive. For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed," &c.

3. When men have no high estimation of Christ and salvation, but whatsoever they may say with their tongues, or dreamingly and speculatively believe, yet in their serious and practical thoughts they have a higher estimation of the

matters of this world, than they have of Christ, and the salvation that he hath purchased ; this is a making light of him. When men account the doctrine of Christ to be but a matter of words and names, as Gallio (Acts xviii. 4), or as Festus (Acts xxv. 19), a superstitious matter about one Jesus who was dead, and Paul saith is alive ; or ask the preachers of the gospel, as the Athenians, " What will this babbler say ? " Acts xvii. 18 : this is contempt of Christ.

4. When men are informed of the truths of the gospel, and on what terms Christ and his benefits may be had, and how it is the will of God that they should believe and accept the offer ; and that he commandeth to do it upon pain of damnation ; and yet men will not consent, unless they could have Christ on terms of their own : they will not part with their worldly contents, nor lay down their pleasures, and profits, and honour at his feet, as being content to take so much of them only as he will give them back, and as is consistent with his will and interest, but think it is a hard saying, that they must forsake all in resolution for Christ : this is a making light of him and their salvation. When men might have part in him and all his benefits if they would, and they will not, unless they may keep the world too ; and are resolved to please their flesh, whatever comes of it ; this is a high contempt of Christ and everlasting life. In Matt. xlii. 21 ; Luke xviii. 23, you may find examples of such as I here describe.

5. When men will promise fair, and profess their willingness to have Christ on his terms, and to forsake all for him, but yet do stick to the world and their sinful courses ; and when it comes to practice, will not be removed by all that Christ hath done and said ; this is making light of Christ and salvation, Jer. xlii. 5, compared with xliii. 2.

III. The causes of this sin are the next thing to be inquired after. It may seem a wonder that ever men, that have the use of their reason, should be so sottish as to make light of matters of such consequence. But the cause is,

1. Some men understand not the very sense of the words of the gospel when they hear them ; and how can they

be taken with that which they understand not? Though we speak to them in plain English, and study to speak it as plain as we can, yet people have so estranged themselves from God, and the matters of their own happiness, that they know not what we say; as if we spoke in another language, and as if they were under that judgment, Isa. xxviii. 11, "With stammering lips, and with another tongue, will he speak to this people."

2. Some that do understand the words that we speak, yet because they are carnal, understand not the matter. "For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," 1 Cor. ii. 14. They are earthly, and these things are heavenly, John iii. 12. These things of the Spirit are not well known by bare hearsay, but by spiritual taste, which none have but those that are taught by the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. ii. 12), that we may know the things that are given us of God.

3. A carnal man apprehendeth not a suitableness in these spiritual and heavenly things to his mind, and therefore he sets light by them, and hath no mind of them. When you tell him of everlasting glory, he heareth you as if you were persuading him to go play with the sun: they are matters of another world, and out of his element; and therefore he hath no more delight in them than a fish would have to be in the fairest meadow, or than a swine hath in a jewel, or a dog in a piece of gold: they may be good to others, but he cannot apprehend them as suitable to him, because he hath a nature that is otherwise inclined: he savoureth not the things of the Spirit, Rom. viii. 5

4. The main cause of the slighting of Christ and salvation is, a secret root of unbelief in men's hearts. Whatsoever they may pretend, they do not soundly and thoroughly believe the word of God: they are taught in general to say the gospel is true; but they never saw the evidence of its truth so far, as thoroughly to persuade them of it; nor have they got their souls settled on the infallibility of God's testimony, nor considered of the truth of the particular doc-

trines revealed in the Scripture, so far as soundly to believe them. Oh did you all but soundly believe the words of this gospel, of the evil of sin, of the need of Christ, and what he hath done for you, and what you must be and do if ever you will be saved by him; and what will become of you for ever if you do it not; I dare say it would cure the contempt of Christ, and you would not make so light of the matters of your salvation. But men do not believe while they say they do, and would face us down that they do, and verily think that they do themselves. There is a root of bitterness, and an evil heart of unbelief, that make them depart from the living God, Heb. ii. 12; iv. 1, 2, 6. Tell any man in this congregation that he shall have a gift of ten thousand pounds, if he will but go to London for it; if he believe you, he will go; but if he believe not, he will not; and if he will not go, you may be sure he believeth not, supposing that he is able. I know a slight belief may stand with a wicked life; such as men have of the truth of a prognostication, it may be true, and it may be false; but a true and sound belief is not consistent with so great neglect of the things that are believed.

5. Christ and salvation are made light of by the world, because of their desperate hardness of heart. The heart is hard naturally, and by custom in sinning made more hard, especially by long abuse of mercy, and neglect of the means of grace, and resisting the Spirit of God. Hence it is that men are turned into such stones: and till God cure them of the stone of the heart, no wonder if they feel not what they know, or regard not what we say, but make light of all: it is hard preaching a stone into tears, or making a rock to tremble. You may stand over a dead body long enough, and say to it, O thou carcass, when thou hast lain rotting and mouldered to dust till the resurrection, God will then call thee to account for thy sin, and cast thee into everlasting fire, before you can make it feel what we say, or fear the misery that is never so truly threatened: when men's hearts are like the highway that is trodden to hardness by long custom in sinning, or like the clay that is hardened to

a stone by the heat of those mercies that should have melted them into repentance ; when they have consciences seared with a hot iron, as the apostle speaks (1 Tim. iv. 2), no wonder then if they be past feeling, and working all uncleanness with greediness do make light of Christ and everlasting glory. Oh that this were not the case of too many of our hearers ! Had we but *living souls* to speak to, they would hear, and feel, and not make light of what we say. I know they are naturally alive, but they are spiritually dead, as Scripture witnesseth, Eph. ii. 3. Oh if there were but one spark of the life of grace in them, the doctrine of salvation by Jesus Christ would appear to them to be the weightiest business in the world ! Oh how confident should I be, methinks, to prevail with men, and to take them off this world, and bring them to mind the matters of another world, if I spake but to men that had life, and sense, and reason ! But when we speak to blocks and dead men, how should we be regarded ? Oh how sad a case are these souls in, that are fallen under this fearful judgment of spiritual madness and deadness ! to have a blind mind, and a hard heart, to be sottish and senseless (Mark iv. 12 ; John xii. 40), lest they should be converted, and their sin should be forgiven them.

6. Christ and salvation are made light of by the world, because they are wholly enslaved to their sense, and taken up with lower things : the matters of another world are out of sight, and so far from their senses, that they cannot regard them ; but present things are nearer them, in their eyes, and in their hands. There must be a living faith to prevail over sense, before men can be so taken with things that are not seen, though they have the word of God for their security, as to neglect and let go things that are still before their eyes. Sense works with great advantage, and therefore doth much in resisting faith where it is ; no wonder then if it carry all before it, where there is no true and lively faith to resist, and to lead the soul to higher things. This cause of making light of Christ and salvation is expressed here in my text : one went to his farm, and

another to his merchandise : men have houses and lands to look after ; they have wife and children to mind ; they have their body and outward estate to regard ; therefore they forget that they have a God, a Redeemer, a soul to mind : these matters of the world are still with them. They see these, but they see not God, nor Christ, nor their souls, nor everlasting glory. These things are near at hand, and therefore work naturally, and so work forcibly ; but the others are thought on as a great way off, and therefore too distant to work on their affections, or be at the present so much regarded by them. Their body hath life and sense, therefore if they want meat, or drink, or clothes, will feel their want, and tell them of it, and give them no rest till their wants be supplied, and therefore they cannot make light of their bodily necessities ; but their souls in spiritual respects are dead, and therefore feel not their wants, but will let them alone in their greatest necessities ; and be as quiet when they are starved and languishing to destruction, as if all were well, and nothing ailed them. And here-upon poor people are wholly taken up in providing for the body, as if they had nothing else to mind. They have their trades and callings to follow, and so much to do from morning to night, that they can find no time for matters of salvation : Christ would teach them, but they have no leisure to hear him : the Bible is before them, but they cannot have time to read it ; a minister is in the town with them, but they cannot have time to go to enquire of him what they should do to be saved : and when they do hear, their hearts are so full of the world, and carried away with these lower matters, that they cannot mind the things which they hear. They are so full of the thoughts, and desires, and cares of this world, that there is no room to pour into them the water of life. The cares of the world do choke the word, and make it become unfruitful, Matt. xiii. 32. Men cannot serve two masters, God and mammon ; but they will lean to the one, and despise the other, Matt. vi. 24. He that loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him, 1 John ii. 15, 16. Men cannot choose but set light by Christ

and salvation, while they set so much by any thing on earth. It is that which is highly esteemed among men that is abominable in the sight of God, Luke xvi. 15. Oh, this is the ruin of many thousand souls! It would grieve the heart of any honest Christian to see how eagerly this vain world is followed every where, and how little men set by Christ and the world to come; to compare the care that men have for the world, with the care of their souls; and the time that they lay out on the world, with that time they lay out for their salvation: to see how the world fills their mouths, their hands, their houses, their hearts, and Christ hath little more than a bare title: to come into their company, and hear no discourse but of the world; to come into their houses, and hear and see nothing but for the world, as if this world would last for ever, or would purchase them another. When I ask sometimes the ministers of the gospel how their labours succeed, they tell me, People continue still the same, and give up themselves wholly to the world; so that they mind not what ministers say to them, nor will give any full entertainment to the word, and all because of the deluding world: and O that too many ministers themselves did not make light of that Christ whom they preach, being drawn away with the love of this world! In a word, men of a worldly disposition do judge of things according to worldly advantages, therefore Christ is slighted; "He is despised and rejected of men, they hide their faces from him, and esteem him not, as seeing no beauty or comeliness in him, that they should desire him," Isa. liii. 3.

7. Christ and salvation are made light of, because men do not soberly consider of the truth and weight of these necessary things. They suffer not their minds so long to dwell upon them, till they procure a due esteem, and deeply affect their heart; did they believe them and not consider of them, how should they work! Oh when men have reason given them to think and consider of the things that most concern them, and yet they will not use it, this causeth their contempt.

8. Christ and salvation are made light of, because men

were never sensible of their sin and misery, and extreme necessity of Christ and his salvation; their eyes were never opened to see themselves as they are; nor their hearts soundly humbled in the sense of their condition: if this were done, they would soon be brought to value a Saviour: a truly broken heart can no more make light of Christ and salvation, than a hungry man of his food, or a sick man of the means that would give him ease; but till then our words cannot have access to their hearts: while sin and misery are made light of, Christ and salvation will be made light of; but when these are perceived an intolerable burden, then nothing will serve the turn but Christ. Till men be truly humbled, they can venture Christ and salvation for a lust, for a little worldly gain, even for less than nothing: but when God hath illuminated them, and broken their hearts, then they would give a world for a Christ; then they must have Christ or they die; all things then are loss and dung to them in regard of the excellent knowledge of Christ, Phil. iii. 8. When they are once pricked in their hearts for sin and misery, then they cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Acts ii. 37. When they are awakened by God's judgments, as the poor jailer, then they cry out, "Sirs, what shall I do to be saved?" Acts xvi. 30. This is the reason why God will bring men so low by humiliation, before he brings them to salvation.

9. Men take occasion to make light of Christ by the commonness of the gospel; because they do hear of it every day, the frequency is an occasion to dull their affections; I say, an occasion, for it is no just cause. Were it a rarity it might take more with them; but now, if they hear a minister preach nothing but these saving truths, they say, We have these every day: they make not light of their bread or drink, their health or life, because they possess them every day; they make not light of the sun because it shineth every day; at least they should not, for the mercy is the greater; but Christ and salvation are made light of because they hear of them often; this is, say they, a good, plain, dry sermon. Pearls are trod into the dirt where they are

common: they loathe this dry manna: "The full soul loathes the honey-comb; but to the hungry every bitter thing is sweet," Prov. xxvii. 7.

10. Christ and salvation are made light of, because of this disjunctive presumption; either that he is sure enough theirs already, and God that is so merciful, and Christ that hath suffered so much for them, is surely resolved to save them, or else it may easily be obtained at any time, if it be not yet so. A conceited facility to have a part in Christ and salvation at any time doth occasion men to make light of them. It is true, that grace is free, and the offer is universal, according to the extent of the preaching of the gospel; and it is true, that men may have Christ when they will; that is, when they are willing to have him on his terms; but he that hath promised thee Christ if thou be willing, hath not promised to make thee willing: and if thou art not willing now, how canst thou think thou shalt be willing hereafter? If thou canst make thine own heart willing, why is it not done now? Can you do it better when sin hath more hardened it, and God may have given thee over to thyself? O sinners! you might do much, though you are not able of yourselves to come in, if you would now subject yourselves to the working of the Spirit, and set in while the gales of grace continue. But did you know what a hard and impossible thing it is to be so much as willing to have Christ and grace, when the heart is given over to itself, and the Spirit hath withdrawn its former invitations, you would not be so confident of your own strength to believe and repent; nor would you make light of Christ upon such foolish confidence. If indeed it be so easy a matter as you imagine, for a sinner to believe and repent at any time, how comes it to pass that it is done by so few; but most of the world do perish in their impenitency when they have all the helps and means that we can afford them? It is true, the thing is very reasonable and easy in itself to a pure nature; but while man is blind and dead, these things are in a sort impossible to him, which are never so easy to others. It is the easiest and sweetest life in the world to a

gracious soul to live in the love of God, and the delightful thoughts of the life to come, where all their hope and happiness lieth : but to a worldly, carnal heart, it is as easy to remove a mountain as to bring them to this. However, these men are their own condemners ; for if they think it so easy a matter to repent and believe, and so to have Christ, and right to salvation, then have they no excuse for neglecting this which they thought so easy. O wretched, impenitent soul ! what mean you to say when God shall ask you, Why did you not repent and love your Redeemer above the world, when you thought it so easy that you could do it at any time ?

IV. *Use 1.* We come now to the application : and hence you may be informed of the blindness and folly of all carnal men. How contemptible are their judgments that think Christ and salvation contemptible ! And how little reason there is why any should be moved by them, or discouraged by any of their scorns or contradictions !

How shall we sooner know a man to be a fool, than if he know no difference between dung and gold ? Is there such a thing as madness in the world, if that man be not mad that sets light by Christ, and his own salvation, while he daily toils for the dung of the earth ? And yet what pity is it to see that a company of poor, ignorant souls will be ashamed of godliness, if such men as these do but deride them ! or will think hardly of a holy life, if such as these do speak against it ! Hearers, if you see any set light by Christ and salvation, do you set light by that man's wit, and by his words, and hear the reproaches of a holy life as you would hear the words of a madman, not with regard, but with a compassion of his misery.

Use 2. What wonder if we and our preaching be despised, and the best ministers complain of ill success, when the ministry of the apostles themselves did succeed no better ? What wonder if, for all that we can say or do, our hearers still set light by Christ and their own salvation, when the apostles' hearers did the same ? They that did second their doctrine by miracles, if any men could have

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shaken and torn in pieces the hearts of sinners, they could have done it; if any could have laid them at their feet, and made them all cry out as some, "What shall we do?" it would have been they. You may see then that it is not merely for want of good preachers that men make light of Christ and salvation. The first news of such a thing as the pardon of sin, and the hopes of glory, and the danger of everlasting misery, would turn the hearts of men within them, if they were as tractable in spiritual matters as in temporal: but, alas, it is far otherwise. It must not seem any strange thing, nor must it too much discourage the preachers of the gospel, if, when they have said all that they can devise to say, to win the hearts of men to Christ, the most do still slight him; and while they bow the knee to him, and honour him with their lips, do yet set so light by him in their hearts, as to prefer every fleshly pleasure or commodity before him. It will be thus with many: let us be glad that it is not thus with all.

Use 3. But for closer application, seeing this is the great condemning sin, before we inquire after it into the hearts of our hearers, it beseems us to begin at home, and see that we, who are preachers of the gospel, be not guilty of it ourselves. The Lord forbid that they that have undertaken the sacred office of revealing the excellencies of Christ to the world, should make light of him themselves, and slight that salvation which they do daily preach. The Lord knows we are all of us so low in our estimation of Christ, and do this great work so negligently, that we have cause to be ashamed of our best sermons; but should this sin prevail in us, we were the most miserable of all men. Brethren, I love not censoriousness; yet dare not befriend so vile a sin in myself or others, under pretence of avoiding it: especially when there is so great necessity that it should be healed first in them that make it their work to heal it in others. Oh that there were no cause to complain that Christ and salvation are made light of by the preachers of it! But, 1. Do not the negligent studies of some speak it out? 2. Doth not their dead and drowsy preaching declare it? Do not they make

light of the doctrine they preach, that do it as if they were half asleep, and feel not what they speak themselves?

3. Doth not the carelessness of some men's private endeavours discover it? What do they for souls? How slightly do they reprove sin! How little do they when they are out of the pulpit for the saving of men's souls!

4. Doth not the continued neglect of those things wherein the interest of Christ consisteth discover it? 1. The church's purity and reformation. 2. Its unity.

5. Do not the covetous and worldly lives of too many discover it, losing advantages for men's souls for a little gain to themselves? And most of this is because men are preachers before they are Christians, and tell men of that which they never felt themselves. Of all men on earth there are few that are in so sad a condition as such ministers: and if, indeed, they do believe that Scripture which they preach, methinks it should be terrible to them in their studying and preaching it.

Use 4. Beloved hearers, the office that God hath called us to, is by declaring the glory of his grace, to help under Christ to the saving of men's souls. I hope you think not that I come hither to-day on any other errand. The Lord knows I had not set a foot out of doors but in hope to succeed in this work for your souls. I have considered, and often considered, what is the matter that so many thousands should perish when God hath done so much for their salvation; and I find this that is mentioned in my text is the cause. It is one of the wonders of the world, that when God hath so loved the world as to send his Son, and Christ hath made a satisfaction by his death sufficient for them all, and offereth the benefits of it so freely to them, even without money or price, that yet the most of the world should perish; yea, the most of those that are thus called by his word! Why, here is the reason, when Christ hath done all this, men make light of it. God hath shewed that he is not unwilling; and Christ hath shewed that he is not unwilling that men should be restored to God's favour and be saved; but men are actually unwilling themselves. God

takes not pleasure in the death of sinners, but rather that they return and live, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. But men take such pleasure in sin, that they will die before they will return. The Lord Jesus was content to be their Physician, and hath provided them a sufficient plaster of his own blood : but if men make light of it, and will not apply it, what wonder if they perish after all ? This Scripture giveth us the reason of their perdition. This, sad experience tells us, the most of the world is guilty of. It is a most lamentable thing to see how most men do spend their care, their time, their pains, for known vanities, while God and glory are cast aside ; that he who is all should seem to them as nothing, and that which is nothing should seem to them as good as all ; that God should set mankind in such a race where heaven or hell is their certain end, and that they should sit down, and loiter, or run after the childish toys of the world, and so much forget the prize that they should run for. Were it but possible for one of us to see the whole of this business as the all-seeing God doth ; to see at one view both heaven and hell, which men are so near ; and see what most men in the world are minding, and what they are doing every day, it would be the saddest sight that could be imagined. Oh how should we marvel at their madness, and lament their self-delusion ! Oh poor distracted world ! what is it you run after ? and what is it that you neglect ? If God had never told them what they were sent into the world to do, or whither they were going, or what was before them in another world, then they had been excusable ; but he hath told them over and over, till they were weary of it. Had he left it doubtful, there had been some excuse ; but it is his sealed word, and they profess to believe it, and would take it ill of us if we should question whether they do believe it or not.

Beloved, I come not to accuse any of you particularly of this crime ; but seeing it is the commonest cause of men's destruction, I suppose you will judge it the fittest matter for our inquiry, and deserving our greatest care for the cure. To which end I shall, 1. Endeavour the conviction of the

guilty. 2. Shall give them such considerations as may tend to humble and reform them. 3. I shall conclude with such direction as may help them that are willing to escape the destroying power of this sin. And for the first, consider,

1. It is the case of most sinners to think themselves freest from those sins that they are most enslaved to; and one reason why we cannot reform them, is because we cannot convince them of their guilt. It is the nature of sin so far to blind and befool the sinner, that he knoweth not what he doth, but thinketh he is free from it when it reigneth in him, or when he is committing it: it bringeth men to be so much unacquainted with themselves, that they know not what they think, or what they mean and intend, nor what they love or hate, much less what they are habituated and disposed to. They are alive to sin, and dead to all the reason, consideration, and resolution that should recover them, as if it were only by their sinning that we must know they are alive. May I hope that you that hear me to-day are but willing to know the truth of your case, and then I shall be encouraged to proceed to an inquiry. God will judge impartially; why should not we do so? Let me, therefore, by these following questions, try whether none of you are slights of Christ and your own salvation. And follow me, I beseech you, by putting them close to your own hearts, and faithfully answering them.

1. Things that men highly value will be remembered, they will be matter of their freest and sweetest thoughts. This is a known case.

Do not those then make light of Christ and salvation that think of them so seldom and coldly in comparison of other things? Follow thy own heart, man, and observe what it daily runneth after; and then judge whether it make not light of Christ.

We cannot persuade men to one hour's sober consideration what they should do for an interest in Christ, or in thankfulness for his love, and yet they will not believe that they make light of him.

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2. Things that we highly value will be matter of our discourse; the judgment and heart will command the tongue. Freely and delightfully will our speech run after them. This also is a known case.

Do not those then make light of Christ and salvation, that shun the mention of his name, unless it be in a vain or sinful use? Those that love not the company where Christ and salvation is much talked of, but think it troublesome, precise discourse: that had rather hear some merry jests, or idle tales, or talk of their riches or business in the world. When you may follow them from morning to night, and scarce have a savoury word of Christ; but perhaps some slight and weary mention of him sometimes; judge whether these make not light of Christ and salvation. How seriously do they talk of the world (Psal. cxliv. 8, 11) and speak vanity! but how heartlessly do they make mention of Christ and salvation!

3. The things that we highly value we would secure the possession of, and therefore would take any convenient course to have all doubts and fears about them well resolved. Do not those men then make light of Christ and salvation that have lived twenty or thirty years in uncertainty whether they have any part in these or not, and yet never seek out for the right resolution of their doubts? Are all that hear me this day certain they shall be saved? Oh that they were! Oh, had you not made light of salvation, you could not so easily bear such doubtings of it; you could not rest till you had made it sure, or done your best to make it sure. Have you nobody, to inquire of, that might help you in such a work? Why, you have ministers that are purposely appointed to that office. Have you gone to them, and told them the doubtfulness of your case, and asked their help in the judging of your condition? Alas, ministers may sit in their studies from one year to another, before ten persons among a thousand will come to them on such an errand! Do not these make light of Christ and salvation? When the gospel pierceth the heart indeed, they cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be

saved?" Acts xvi. 30. Trembling and astonished, Paul cries out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6. And so did the convinced Jews to Peter, Acts ii. 37. But when hear we such questions?

4. The things that we value do deeply affect us, and some motions will be in the heart according to our estimation of them. O sirs, if men made not light of these things, what working would there be in the hearts of all our hearers! What strange affections would it raise in them to hear of the matters of the world to come! How would their hearts melt before the power of the gospel! What sorrow would be wrought in the discovery of their sins! What astonishment at the consideration of their misery! What unspeakable joy at the glad tidings of salvation by the blood of Christ! What resolution would be raised in them upon the discovery of their duty! Oh what hearers should we have, if it were not for this sin! Whereas now we are liker to weary them, or preach them asleep with matters of this unspeakable moment. We talk to them of Christ and salvation till we make their heads ache: little would one think by their careless carriage that they heard and regarded what we said, or thought we spoke at all to them.

5. Our estimation of things will be seen in the diligence of our endeavours. That which we highest value, we shall think no pains too great to obtain. Do not those men then make light of Christ and salvation, that think all too much that they do for them; that murmur at his service, and think it too grievous for them to endure? that ask of his service as Judas of the ointment, What need this waste? Cannot men be saved without so much ado? This is more ado than needs. For the world they will labour all the day, and all their lives; but for Christ and salvation they are afraid of doing too much. Let us preach to them as long as we will, we cannot bring them to relish or resolve upon a life of holiness. Follow them to their houses, and you shall not hear them read a chapter, nor call upon God with their families once a day: nor will they allow him that one day in seven which he hath separated to his service.

But pleasure, or worldly business, or idleness, must have a part. And many of them are so far hardened as to reproach them that will not be as mad as themselves. And is not Christ worth the seeking? Is not everlasting salvation worth more than all this? Doth not that soul make light of all these, that thinks his ease more worth than they? Let but common sense judge.

6. That which we most highly value, we think we cannot buy too dear: Christ and salvation are freely given, and yet the most of men go without them, because they cannot enjoy the world and them together. They are called but to part with that which would hinder them from Christ, and they will not do it. They are called but to give God his own, and to resign all to his will, and let go the profits and pleasures of this world, when they must let go either Christ or them, and they will not. They think this too dear a bargain, and say they cannot spare these things: they must hold their credit with men; they must look to their estates: how shall they live else? They must have their pleasure, whatsoever becomes of Christ and salvation: as if they could live without Christ better than without these: as if they were afraid of being losers by Christ, or could make a saving match by losing their souls to gain the world. Christ hath told us over and over, that if we will not forsake all for him we cannot be his disciples, Matt. x. Far are these men from forsaking all, and yet will needs think that they are his disciples indeed.

7. That which men highly esteem, they would help their friends to as well as themselves. Do not those men make light of Christ and salvation, that can take so much care to leave their children portions in the world, and do so little to help them to heaven? that provide outward necessities so carefully for their families, but do so little to the saving of their souls? Their neglected children and friends will witness, that either Christ, or their children's souls, or both, were made light of.

8. That which men highly esteem, they will so diligently seek after, that you may see it in the success, if it be a

matter within their reach. You may see how many make light of Christ, by the little knowledge they have of him, and the little communion with him, and communication from him; and the little, yea, none of his special grace in them. Alas! how many ministers can speak it to the sorrow of their hearts, that many of their people know almost nothing of Christ, though they hear of him daily! Nor know they what they must do to be saved: if we ask them an account of these things, they answer as if they understood not what we say to them, and tell us they are no scholars, and therefore think they are excusable for their ignorance. Oh if these men had not made light of Christ and their salvation, but had bestowed but half as much pains to know and enjoy him as they have done to understand the matters of their trades and callings in the world, they would not have been so ignorant as they are: they make light of these things, and therefore will not be at the pains to study or learn them. When men that can learn the hardest trade in a few years, have not learned a catechism, nor how to understand their creed, under twenty or thirty years' preaching, nor can abide to be questioned about such things; doth not this shew that they have slighted them in their hearts? How will these despisers of Christ and salvation be able one day to look him in the face, and to give an account of these neglects?

Thus much I have spoken in order to your conviction. Do not some of your consciences by this time smite you, and say, I am the man that have made light of my salvation? If they do not, it is because you make light of it still, for all that is said to you. But because, if it be the will of the Lord, I would fain have this damning distemper cured, and am loth to leave you in such a desperate condition, if I knew how to remedy it, I will give you some considerations, which may move you, if you be men of reason and understanding, to look better about you; and I beseech you to weigh them, and make use of them as we go, and lay open your hearts to the work of grace, and sadly

bethink you what a case you are in, if you prove such as make light of Christ.

Consider, 1. Thou makest light of him that made not light of thee who didst deserve it. Thou wast worthy of nothing but contempt. As a man, what art thou but a worm to God? As a sinner, thou art far viler than a toad: yet Christ was so far from making light of thee and thy happiness, that he came down into the flesh, and lived a life of suffering, and offered himself a sacrifice to the justice which thou hadst provoked, that thy miserable soul might have a remedy. It is no less than miracles of love and mercy, that he hath shewed to us: and yet shall we slight them after all?

Angels admire them, whom they less concern (1 Pet. i. 12), and shall redeemed sinners make light of them? What barbarous, yea, devilish, yea, worse than devilish ingratitude is this! The devils never had a saviour offered them, but thou hast, and dost thou yet make light of Him?

2. Consider, the work of man's salvation by Jesus Christ is the master-piece of all the works of God, wherein he would have his love and mercy to be magnified. As the creation declareth his goodness and power, so doth redemption his goodness and mercy; he hath contrived the very frame of his worship so, that it shall much consist in the magnifying of this work; and after all this, will you make light of it? "His name is Wonderful," Isa. ix. 6. "He did the work that none could do," John xv. 24. "Greater love could none shew than his," John xv. 13. How great was the evil and misery that he delivered us from! the good procured for us! All are wonders, from his birth to his ascension; from our new birth to our glorification, all are wonders of matchless mercy—and yet do you make light of them?

3. You make light of matters of greatest excellency and moment in the world: you know not what it is that you slight: had you well known, you could not have done it. As Christ said to the woman of Samaria (John iv. 10), Hadst thou known who it is that speakest to thee, thou

wouldst have asked of him the waters of life: had they known they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, 1 Cor. ii. 8. So had you known what Christ is, you would not have made light of him; had you been one day in heaven, and but seen what they possess, and seen also what miserable souls must endure that are shut out, you would never sure have made so light of Christ again.

O sirs, it is no trifles or jesting matters that the gospel speaks of. I must needs profess to you, that when I have the most serious thoughts of these things myself, I am ready to marvel that such amazing matters do not overwhelm the souls of men; that the greatness of the subject doth not so overmatch our understandings and affections, as even to drive men beside themselves, but that God hath always somewhat allayed it by the distance: much more that men should be so blockish as to make light of them. O Lord, that men did but know what everlasting glory and everlasting torments are; would they then hear us as they do? would they read and think of these things as they do? I profess I have been ready to wonder, when I have heard such weighty things delivered, how people can forbear crying out in the congregation; much more how they can rest till they have gone to their ministers, and learned what they should do to be saved, that this great business might be put out of doubt. Oh that heaven and hell should work no more on men! Oh that everlastingness should work no more! Oh how can you forbear when you are alone to think with yourselves what it is to be everlastingly in joy or in torment! I wonder that such thoughts do not break your sleep; and that they come not in your mind when you are about your labour! I wonder how you can almost do any thing else! how you can have any quietness in your minds! how you can eat, or drink, or rest, till you have got some ground of everlasting consolations! Is that a man or a corpse that is not affected with matters of this moment? that can be readier to sleep than to tremble when he heareth how he must stand at the bar of God? Is that a man or a clod of clay that can rise and lie down without being deeply

affected with his everlasting estate? that can follow his worldly business, and make nothing of the great business of salvation or damnation; and that when they know it is hard at hand! Truly, sirs, when I think of the weight of the matter, I wonder at the very best of God's saints upon earth that they are no better, and do no more in so weighty a case. I wonder at those whom the world accounteth more holy than needs, and scorn for making too much ado, that they can put off Christ and their souls with so little; that they pour not out their souls in every supplication; that they are not more taken up with God; that their thoughts be not more serious in preparation for their account. I wonder that they be not a hundred times more strict in their lives, and more laborious and unwearied in striving for the crown, than they are. And for myself, as I am ashamed of my dull and careless heart, and of my slow and unprofitable course of life; so the Lord knows I am ashamed of every sermon that I preach: when I think what I have been speaking of, and who sent me, and what men's salvation or damnation is so much concerned in it, I am ready to tremble, lest God should judge me as a sligher of his truth, and the souls of men, and lest in the best sermon I should be guilty of their blood. Methinks we should not speak a word to men in matters of such consequence without tears, or the greatest earnestness that possibly we can: were not we too much guilty of the sin which we reprove, it would be so. Whether we are alone, or in company, methinks our end, and such an end, should still be in our mind, and as before our eyes; and we should sooner forget any thing, and set light by any thing, or by all things, than by this.

Consider, 4. Who is it that sends this weighty message to you? Is it not God himself? Shall the God of heaven speak, and men make light of it? You would not slight the voice of an angel, or a prince.

5. Whose salvation is it that you make light of? Is it not your own? Are you no more near or dear to yourselves than to make light of your own happiness or misery? Why, sirs, do you not care whether you be saved or damned?

is self-love lost? are you turned your own enemies? As he that slighteth his meat doth slight his life; so if you slight Christ, whatsoever you may think, you will find it was your own salvation that you slighted. Hear what he saith, "All they that hate me love death," Prov. viii. 36.

6. Your sin is greater, in that you profess to believe the gospel which you make so light of. For a professed infidel to do it that believes not that ever Christ died, or rose again; or doth not believe that there is a heaven or hell; this were no such marvel: but for you that make it your creed, and your very religion, and call yourselves Christians, and have been baptized into this faith, and seemed to stand to it, this is the wonder, and hath no excuse. What! believe that you shall live in endless joy or torment, and yet make no more of it to escape torment, and obtain that joy! What! believe that God will shortly judge you, and yet make no more preparation for it! Either say plainly, I am no Christian, I do not believe these wonderful things, I will believe nothing but what I see; or else let your hearts be affected with your belief, and live as you say you do believe. What do you think when you repeat the creed, and mention Christ's judgment and everlasting life?

7. What are these things you set so much by, as to prefer them before Christ and the saving of your souls? Have you found a better friend, a greater and surer happiness than this? Good Lord! what dung is it that men make so much of, while they set so light by everlasting glory! What toys are they that they are daily taken up with, while matters of life and death are neglected! Why, sirs, if you had every one a kingdom in your hopes, what were it in comparison of the everlasting kingdom? I cannot but look upon all the glory and dignity of this world, lands and lordships, crowns and kingdoms, even as on some brain-sick, beggarly fellow, that borroweth fine clothes, and plays the part of a king or a lord for an hour on a stage, and then comes down, and the sport is ended, and they are beggars again. Were it not for God's interest in the authority of magistrates, or for the service they might do him, I should

judge no better of them. For as to their own glory, it is but a smoke: what matter is it whether you live poor or rich, unless it were a greater matter to die rich than it is? You know well enough that death levels all. What matter is it at judgment, whether you be to answer for the life of a rich man or a poor man? Is Dives then any better than Lazarus? O that men knew what a poor deceiving shadow they grasp at, while they let go the everlasting substance! The strongest, and richest, and most voluptuous sinners, do but lay in fuel for their sorrows, while they think they are gathering together a treasure. Alas! they are asleep, and dream that they are happy; but when they awake, what a change will they find! Their crown is made of thorns: their pleasure hath such a sting as will stick in the heart through all eternity, except unfeigned repentance do prevent it. O how sadly will these wretches be convinced ere long, what a foolish bargain they made in selling Christ and their salvation for these trifles! Let your farms and merchandise then save you if they can; and do that for you that Christ would have done. Cry then to thy Baal to save thee! Oh what thoughts have drunkards and adulterers, &c. of Christ, that will not part with the basest lust for him! "For a piece of bread," saith Solomon, "such men do transgress," Prov. xxviii. 11.

8. To set so light by Christ and salvation, is a certain mark that thou hast no part in them, and if thou so continue, that Christ will set as light by thee: "Those that honour him he will honour, and those that despise him shall be lightly esteemed," 1 Sam. ii. 30. Thou wilt feel one day that thou canst not live without him; thou wilt confess then thy need of him; and then thou mayest go look for a saviour where thou wilt; for he will be no saviour for thee hereafter, that wouldst not value him, and submit to him here. Then who will prove the loser by thy contempt? O what a thing will it be for a poor miserable soul to cry to Christ for help in the day of extremity, and to hear so sad an answer as this! Thou didst set light by me and my law in the day of thy prosperity, and I will now set as light

by thee in thy adversity. Read Prov. i. 24, to the end. Thou that, as Esau, didst sell thy birthright for a mess of pottage, shalt then find no place for repentance, though thou seek it with tears, Heb. xii. 17. Do you think that Christ shed his blood to save them that continue to make light of it? and to save them that value a cup of drink or a lust before his salvation? I tell you, sirs, though you set so light by Christ and salvation, God doth not so: he will not give them on such terms as these: he valueth the blood of his Son, and the everlasting glory; and he will make you value them if ever you have them. Nay, this will be thy condemnation, and leaveth no remedy. All the world cannot save him that sets light by Christ, Heb. ii. 3; Luke xiv. 24. None of them shall taste of his supper, Matt. x. 37. Nor can you blame him to deny you what you made light of yourselves. Can you find fault if you miss of the salvation which you slighted?

9. The time is near when Christ and salvation will not be made light of as now they are. When God hath shaken those careless souls out of their bodies, and you must answer for all your sins in your own name; oh then what would you give for a saviour! When a thousand bills shall be brought in against you, and none to relieve you; then you will consider, Oh! Christ would now have stood between me and the wrath of God: had I not despised him, he would have answered all. When you see the world hath left you, and your companions in sin have deceived themselves and you, and all your merry days are gone; then what would you give for that Christ and salvation that now you account not worth your labour! Do you think when you see the judgment set, and you are doomed to everlasting perdition for your wickedness, that you should then make as light of Christ as now? Why will you not judge now as you know you shall judge then? Will he then be worth ten thousand worlds? and is he not now worth your highest estimation and dearest affection?

10. God will not only deny thee that salvation thou madest light of, but he will take from thee all that which

thou didst value before it : he that most highly esteems Christ shall have him, and the creatures so far as they are good here, and him without the creature hereafter, because the creature is not useful ; and he that sets more by the creature than by Christ, shall have some of the creature without Christ here, and neither Christ nor it hereafter.

So much of these considerations, which may shew the true face of this heinous sin.

What think you now, friends, of this business ? Do you not see by this time what a case that soul is in that maketh light of Christ and salvation ? What need then is there that you should take heed lest this should prove your own case ! The Lord knows it is too common a case. Whoever is found guilty at the last of this sin, it were better for that man he had never been born. It were better for him he had been a Turk or Indian, that never had heard the name of a Saviour, and that never had salvation offered to him : for such men " have no cloak for their sin," John xv. 22. Besides all the rest of their sins, they have this killing sin to answer for, which will undo them. And this will aggravate their misery, that Christ whom they set light by must be their Judge, and for this sin will he judge them. Oh that such would now consider how they will answer that question that Christ put to their predecessors, " How will ye escape the damnation of hell ? " Matt. xxiii. 33 : or, " How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation ? " Heb. ii. 3. Can you escape without a Christ ? or will a despised Christ save you then ? If he be accursed that sets light by father or mother (Deut. xxvii. 16), what then is he that sets light by Christ ? It was the heinous sin of the Jews, that among them were found such as set light by father and mother, Ezek. xxii. 7. But among us, men slight the Father of spirits ! In the name of God, brethren, I beseech you to consider how you will then bear his anger which you now make light of ! You that cannot make light of a little sickness or want, or of natural death, no, not of a tooth-ache, but groan as if you were undone ; how will you then make light of the fury of the Lord, which will burn

against the contemners of his grace! Doth it not behove you beforehand to think of these things?

Hitherto I have been convincing you of the evil of the sin, and the danger that followeth: I come now to know your resolution for the time to come. What say you? Do you mean to set as light by Christ and salvation as hitherto you have done; and to be the same men after all this? I hope not. Oh let not your ministers that would fain save you, be brought in as witnesses against you to condemn you; at least, I beseech you, put not this upon me. Why, sirs, if the Lord shall say to us at judgment, Did you never tell these men what Christ did for their souls, and what need they had of him, and how nearly it did concern them to look to their salvation, that they made light of it? We must needs say the truth; Yea, Lord, we told them of it as plainly as we could; we would have gone on our knees to them if we had thought it would have prevailed; we did entreat them as earnestly as we could to consider these things: they heard of these things every day; but, alas, we could never get them to their hearts: they gave us the hearing, but they made light of all that we could say to them. Oh! sad will it prove on your side, if you force us to such an answer as this.

But if the Lord do move the hearts of any of you, and you resolve to make light of Christ no more; or if any of you say, We do not make light of him; let me tell you here in the conclusion what you must do, or else you shall be judged as slightsers of Christ and salvation.

And first I will tell you what will not serve the turn.

1. You may have a notional knowledge of Christ, and the necessity of his blood, and of the excellency of salvation, and yet perish as neglecters of him. This is too common among professed Christians. You may say all that other men do of him: what gospel passages had Balaam! Jesus I know, and Paul I know, the very devils could say, who believe and tremble, James ii. 19.

2. You may weep at the history of Christ's passion, when

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you read how he was used by the Jews, and yet make light of him, and perish for so doing.

3. You may come desirously to his word and ordinances. Herod heard gladly; so do many that yet must perish as neglecters of salvation.

4. You may in a fit of fear have strong desires after a Christ, to ease you, and to save you from God's wrath, as Saul had of David to play before him; and yet you may perish for making light of Christ.

5. You may obey him in many things so far as will not ruin you in the world, and escape much of the pollutions of the world by his knowledge, and yet neglect him.

6. You may suffer and lose much for him, so far as leaveth you an earthly felicity; as Ananias; and the young man, Matt. xix. 16-22. Some parcels of their pleasures and profits many will part with in hope of salvation, that shall perish everlastingly for valuing it no more.

7. You may be esteemed by others a man zealous for Christ, and loved and admired upon that account, and yet be one that shall perish for making light of him.

8. You may verily think yourselves, that you set more by Christ and salvation than any thing, and yet be mistaken, and be judged as contemners of him: Christ justifieth not all that justify themselves.

9. You may be zealous preachers of Christ and salvation, and reprove others for this neglect, and lament the sin of the world in the like expression as I have done this day; and yet if you or I have no better evidence to prove our hearty esteem of Christ and salvation, we are undone for all this.

You hear, brethren, what will not serve the turn; will you now hear what persons you must be if you would not be condemned as slights of Christ? O search whether it be thus with your souls or no!

1. Your esteem of Christ and salvation must be greater than your esteem of all the honours, profits, or pleasures of this world, or else you slight him: no less will be accounted sincere, nor accepted to your salvation. Think not this

hard, when there is no comparison in the matters esteemed. To esteem the greatest glory on earth before Christ and everlasting glory, is a greater folly and wrong to Christ, than to esteem a dog before your prince, would be folly in you, and a wrong to him. Scripture is plain in this; "He that loveth father or mother, wife, children, house, land, or his own life, more than me, is not worthy of me, and cannot be my disciple," Matt. x. 37; Luke xiv. 26.

2. You must manifest this esteem of Christ and salvation in your daily endeavours and seeking after him, and in parting with any thing that he shall require of you. God is a Spirit, and will not take a hypocritical profession instead of the heart and spiritual service which he commandeth. He will have the heart or nothing; and the chief room in the heart too: these must be had.

If you say that you do not make light of Christ, or will not hereafter; let me try you in these few particulars, whether indeed you mean as you say, and do not dissemble.

1. Will you for the time to come make Christ and salvation the chiefest matter of your care and study? Thrust them not out of your thoughts as a needless or unprofitable subject; nor allow it only some running, slight thoughts, which will not affect you. But will you make it your business once a day to bethink you soberly, when you are alone, what Christ hath done for you, and what he will do, if you do not make light of it; and what it is to be everlastingly happy or miserable? And what all things in this world are in comparison of your salvation; and how they will shortly leave you; and what mind you will be then of, and how you will esteem them? Will you promise me now and then to make it your business to withdraw yourselves from the world, and set yourselves to such considerations as these? If you will not, are not you slights of Christ and salvation, that will not be persuaded soberly to think on them? This is my first question to put you to the trial, whether you will value Christ or not.

2. Will you for the time to come set more by the word of God, which contains the discovery of these excellent things,

and is your charter for salvation, and your guide thereunto? You cannot set by Christ, but you must set by his word: therefore the despisers of it are threatened with destruction, Prov. xiii. 13. Will you therefore attend to the public preaching of this word; will you read it daily; will you resolve to obey it whatever it may cost you? If you will not do this, but make light of the word of God, you shall be judged as such as make light of Christ and salvation, whatever you may fondly promise to yourselves.

3. Will you for the time to come esteem more of the officers of Christ, whom he hath purposely appointed to guide you to salvation; and will you make use of them for that end? Alas, it is not to give the minister a good word, and speak well of him, and pay him his tithes duly, that will serve the turn: it is for the necessity of your souls that God hath set them in his church; that they may be as physicians under Christ, or his apothecaries to apply his remedies to your spiritual diseases, not only in public, but also in private: that you may have some to go to for the resolving of your doubts, and for your instruction where you are ignorant, and for the help of their exhortations and prayers. Will you use hereafter to go to your ministers privately, and solicit them for advice? And if you have not such of your own as are fit, get advice from others; and ask them, What you shall do to be saved? how to prepare for death and judgment? And will you obey the word of God in their mouths? If you will not do this much, nor so much as inquire of those that should teach you, nor use the means which Christ hath established in his church for your help, your own consciences shall one day witness that you were such as made light of Christ and salvation. If any of you doubt whether it be your duty thus to ask counsel of your teachers, as sick men do of their physicians, let your own necessities resolve you, let God's express word resolve you; see what is said of the priests of the Lord, even before Christ's coming, when much of their work did lie in ceremonies: "My covenant was with him of life and peace: and I gave them to him (to Levi) for the fear wherewith

he feared me, and was afraid before my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips; he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts," Mal. ii. 5, 6.

Nay, you must not only inquire, and submit to their advice, but also to their just reprehensions, and church censures; and without proud repining submit to the discipline of Christ in their hands, if it shall be used in the congregations whereof you are members.

4. Will you for the time to come make conscience of daily and earnest prayer to God, that you may have a part in Christ and salvation? Do not go out of doors till you have breathed out these desires to God; do not lie down to rest till you have breathed out these desires: say not, God knoweth my necessity without so often praying; for though he do, yet he will have you to know them, and feel them, and exercise your desires and all the graces of his Spirit in these duties: it is he that hath commanded to pray continually, though he know your needs without it, 1 Thess. v. 17. Christ himself spent whole nights in prayer, and encourageth us to this course, Luke xviii. 1. If you will not be persuaded to this much, how can you say that you make not light of Christ and salvation?

5. Will you for the time to come resolutely cast away your known sins at the command of Christ? If you have been proud, or contentious, or malicious, and revengeful, be so no more. If you have been adulterers, or swearers, or cursers, be so no more. You cannot hold these, and yet set by Christ and salvation.

What say you? Are you resolved to let them go? If not, when you know it is the will of Christ, and he hath told you such shall not enter into his kingdom, do not you make light of him?

6. Will you for the time to come serve God in the dearest as well as in the cheapest part of his service? not only with your tongues, but with your purses and your deeds? Shall

the poor find that you set more by Christ than this world? Shall it appear in any good uses that God calls you to be liberal in, according to your abilities? "Pure religion and undefiled before God is this, To visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction," James i. 27. Will you resolve to stick to Christ, and make sure this work of salvation, though it cost you all that you have in the world? If you think these terms too dear, you make light of Christ, and will be judged accordingly.

7. Will you for the time to come make much of all things that tend to your salvation; and take every help that God offereth you, and gladly make use of all his ordinances? Attend upon his strengthening sacraments; spend the Lord's own day in these holy employments; instruct your children and servants in these things, Deut. vi. 6, 7; get into good company that set their faces heavenward, and will teach you the way, and help you thither; and take heed of the company of wicked scorners, or foolish, voluptuous, fleshly men, or any that would hinder you in this work. Will you do these things? Or will you shew that you are slights of Christ by neglecting them?

8. Will you do all this with delight; not as your toil, but as your pleasure? And take it for your highest honour that you may be Christ's disciples, and may be admitted to serve and worship him; and rejoice with holy confidence in the sufficiency of that sacrifice by which you may have pardon of all your failings, and right to the inheritance of the saints in light? If you will do these things sincerely, you will shew that you set by Christ and salvation; else not.

Dearly beloved in the Lord, I have now done that work which I came upon; what effect it hath, or will have, upon your hearts, I know not, nor is it any further in my power to accomplish that which my soul desireth for you. Were it the Lord's will that I might have my wish herein, the words that you have this day heard should so stick by you, that the secure should be awakened by them, and none of you should perish by the slighting of your salvation. I

cannot now follow you to your several habitations to apply this word to your particular necessities ; but O that I could make every man a preacher to himself that it might do it, which is ever with you !—That the next, time you go prayerless to bed, or about your business, conscience might cry out, Dost thou set no more by Christ and thy salvation ? That the next time you are tempted to think hardly of a holy and diligent life (I will not say to deride it as more ado than needs), conscience might cry out to thee, Dost thou set so light by Christ and thy salvation ? That the next time you are ready to rush upon known sin, and to please your fleshly desires against the command of God, conscience might cry out, Is Christ and salvation no more worth, than to cast them away, or venture them for thy lusts ? That when you are following the world with your most eager desires, forgetting the world to come, and the change that is a little before you, conscience might cry out to you, Is Christ and salvation no more worth than so ? That when you are next spending the Lord's day in idleness or vain sports, conscience might tell you what you are doing. In a word, that in all your neglects of duty, your sticking at the supposed labour or cost of a godly life, yea, in all your cold and lazy prayers and performances, conscience might tell you how unsuitable such endeavours are to the reward ; and that Christ and salvation should not be so slighted. I will say no more but this at this time, It is a thousand pities that when God hath provided a Saviour for the world, and when Christ hath suffered so much for their sins, and made so full a satisfaction to justice, and purchased so glorious a kingdom for his saints, and all this is offered so freely to sinners, to lost, unworthy sinners, even for nothing, that yet so many millions should everlastingly perish because they make light of their Saviour and salvation, and prefer the vain world and their lusts before them. I have delivered my message, the Lord open your hearts to receive it. I have persuaded you with the word of truth and soberness ; the Lord persuade you more effectually, or else all this is lost. Amen.

A

CALL TO THE UNCONVERTED

TO TURN AND LIVE,

**AND ACCEPT OF MERCY WHILE MERCY MAY BE HAD, AS EVER THEY
WOULD FIND MERCY IN THE DAY OF THEIR EXTREMITY ;**

FROM THE LIVING GOD:

*To which are added, Forms of Prayer for Morning and Evening for a
Family, for a penitent Sinner, and for the Lord's Day.*

PREFACE

IN that short acquaintance I had with that reverend learned servant of Christ, Bishop Usher, he was oft, from first to last, importuning me to write a directory for the several ranks of professed Christians, which might distinctly give each one their portion; beginning with the unconverted, and then proceeding to the babes in Christ, and then to the strong; and mixing some special helps against the several sins that they are addicted to. By the suddenness of his motion at our first congress, I perceived it was in his mind before; and I told him, both that it was abundantly done by many already, and that his unacquaintedness with my weakness, might make him think me fitter for it than I was. But this did not satisfy him, but still he made it his request. I confess I was not moved by his reasons, nor did I apprehend any great need of doing more than is done in that way: nor that I was likely to do more. And, therefore, I parted from him without the least purpose to answer his desire. But since his death, his words often came into my mind; and the great reverence I bore to him, did the more incline me to think with some complacency of his motion. And having of late intended to write a "Family Directory," I began to apprehend how congruously the forementioned work should lead the way; and the several conditions of men's souls be spoken of, before we come to the several relations. Hereupon I resolved, by God's assistance, to proceed in the order following. First, to speak to the impenitent, unconverted sinners, who are not yet so much as purposing to turn; or at least are not setting about the work. And with these, I thought, a wakening persuasive was a more necessary means than mere directions; for directions suppose men willing to obey them. But the persons that we have first to deal with, are wilful and asleep in

sin, and as men that are past feeling, having given themselves over to sin with greediness, Eph. iv. 19. My next work must be for those that have some purposes to turn, and are about the work, to direct them for a thorough and a true conversion, that they miscarry not in the birth. The third part must be directions for the younger and weaker sort of Christians, that they may be established, built up, and persevere. The fourth part, directions for lapsed and backsliding Christians, for their safe recovery. Besides these, there is intended some short persuasions and directions against some special errors of the times, and against some common, killing sins. As for directions to doubting, troubled consciences, that is done already. And the strong I shall not write directions for, because they are so much taught of God already. And then the last part is intended more especially for families, as such, directing the several relations in their duties. Some of these are already written. Whether I shall have life and leisure for the rest, God only knoweth: and therefore I shall publish the several parts by themselves, as I write them. And the rather because they are intended for men of different states, and because I would not deter them by the bulk or price, from reading what is written for their benefit. The use that this part is published for, is, 1. For masters and parents to read often in their families, if they have servants or children that are yet unconverted. 2. For all such unconverted persons to read and consider of themselves. 3. For the richer sort, that have any pity on such miserable souls, to give to the unsanctified that need them (if they have not fitter at hand to use and give). The Lord awake us to work while it is day, for the saving of our own and others' souls, in subser-viency to the blessed God, the Maker, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier of souls.

RICHARD BAXTER.

December 10, 1657

TO ALL UNSANCTIFIED PERSONS THAT SHALL READ
THIS BOOK, ESPECIALLY MY HEARERS IN THE
PARISH OF KIDDERMINSTER;

MEN AND BRETHREN,

THE eternal God that made you for life everlasting, and hath redeemed you by his only Son, when you had lost it and yourselves, being mindful of you in your sin and misery, hath indited the gospel, and sealed it by his Spirit, and commanded his ministers to preach it to the world, that pardon being freely offered you, and heaven being set before you, he might call you off from your fleshly pleasures, and from following after this deceitful world, and acquaint you with the life you were created and redeemed for, before you are dead and past remedy. He sendeth you not prophets or apostles, that receive their message by immediate revelation, but yet he calleth you by his ordinary ministers, who are commissioned by him to preach the same gospel which Christ and his apostles first delivered. The Lord standeth over you, and seeth how you forget him and your latter end, and how light you make of everlasting things, as men that understand not what they have to do or suffer. He seeth how bold you are in sin, and how fearless of his threatenings, and how careless of your souls, and how the works of infidels are in your lives, while the belief of Christians is in your mouths. He seeth the dreadful day at hand, when your sorrows will begin, and you must lament all this with fruitless cries in torment and desperation; and then the remembrance of your folly will tear your hearts, if true conversion now prevent it not. In compassion of your sinful, miserable souls, the Lord, that better knows your case than you can know it, hath made it our duty to speak to you in his name (2 Cor. v. 19), and to tell you plainly of your sin and misery, and what will be your end, and how sad a change

you will shortly see, if yet you go on a little longer. Having bought you at so dear a rate as the blood of his Son Jesus Christ, and made you so free and general a promise of pardon and grace, and everlasting glory, he commandeth us to tender all this to you, as the gift of God, and to entreat you to consider of the necessity and worth of what he offereth. He seeth and pitieth you, while you are drowned in worldly cares and pleasures, and eagerly following childish toys, and wasting that short and precious time for a thing of nought, in which you should make ready for an everlasting life; and therefore he hath commanded us to call after you, and to tell you how you lose your labour, and are about to lose your souls, and to tell you what greater and better things you might certainly have, if you would hearken to his call, Isa. lv. 1-3. We believe and obey the voice of God; and come to you daily on his message, who hath charged us to preach and be instant with you in season and out of season, and to lift up our voice like a trumpet, and shew you your transgressions and your sins, Isa. lviii. 1; 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. But woe and alas! to the grief of our souls, and your own undoing, you stop your ears, you stiffen your necks, you harden your hearts, and break our hearts, and send us back to God with groans, to tell him that we have done his message, but can do no good, nor scarcely get a sober hearing. Oh that our eyes were as a fountain of tears, that we might lament our ignorant, careless people, that have Christ before them, and pardon, and life, and heaven before them, and have not hearts to know and value them! that might have Christ, and grace, and glory, as well as others, if it were not for their wilful negligence and contempt! Oh that the Lord would fill our hearts with more compassion to these miserable souls, that we might cast ourselves even at their feet, and follow them to their houses, and speak to them with our bitter tears. For long have we preached to many of them, as in vain: we study plainness to make them understand, and many of them will not understand us: we study serious, piercing words to make them feel, but they will not feel.

If the greatest matters would work with them, we should awake them. If the sweetest things would work, we should entice them, and win their hearts. If the most dreadful things would work, we should at least affright them from their wickedness. If truth and sincerity would take with them, we should soon convince them. If the God that made them, and the Christ that bought them, might be heard, the case would soon be altered with them. If Scripture might be heard, we should soon prevail. If reason, even the best and strongest reason, might be heard, we should not doubt but we should speedily convince them. If experience might be heard, and even their own experience, and the experience of all the world, the matter might be mended. Yea, if the conscience within them might be heard, the case would be better with them than it is. But if nothing can be heard, what then shall we do for them? If the dreadful God of heaven be slighted, who then shall be regarded? If the inestimable love and blood of a Redeemer be made light of, what then shall be valued? If heaven have no desirable glory with them, and everlasting joys be worth nothing; if they can jest at hell, and dance about a bottomless pit, and play with the consuming fire, and that when God and man do warn them of it; what shall we do for such souls as these?

Once more, in the name of the God of heaven, I shall do the message to you which he hath commanded us, and leave it in these standing lines to convert you or condemn you; to change you, or rise up in judgment against you, and to be a witness to your faces, that once you had a serious call to turn. Hear, all you that are the drudges of the world, and the servants of flesh and Satan; that spend your days in looking after prosperity on earth, and drown your consciences in drinking, and gluttony, and idleness, and foolish sports, and know your sin, and yet will sin, as if you set God at defiance, and bid him do his worst, and spare not. Harken, all you that mind not God, and have no heart to holy things, and feel no savour in the word or worship of the Lord, or in the thoughts or mention of eternal life;

that are careless of your immortal souls, and never bestowed one hour in inquiring what case they are in, whether sanctified or unsanctified, and whether you are ready to appear before the Lord! Hearken, all you that by sinning in the light, have sinned yourselves into atheism and infidelity, and do not believe the word of God. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear" the gracious and yet dreadful call of God! His eye is all this while upon you, your sins are registered, and you shall surely hear of them again; God keepeth the book now, and he will write it upon your consciences with his terrors; and then you also shall keep it yourselves. O sinners! that you but knew what you are doing! and whom you are all this while offending! The sun itself is darkness before the glory of that Majesty which you daily abuse and carelessly provoke. The sinning angels were not able to stand before him, but were cast down to be tormented with devils. And dare such silly worms as you so carelessly offend, and set yourselves against your Maker? O that you did but a little know what a case that wretched soul is in, that hath engaged the living God against him! The word of his mouth that made thee can unmake thee; a frown of his face will cut thee off, and cast thee out into utter darkness: how eager are the devils to be doing with thee that have tempted thee, and do but wait for the word from God to take and use thee as their own! And then in a moment thou wilt be in hell. If God be against thee, all things are against thee. This world is but thy prison for all that thou so lovest it: thou art but reserved in it to the day of wrath, Job xxi. 30. The Judge is coming, thy soul is even going: yea, a little while and thy friends shall say of thee, He is dead; and thou shalt see the things that thou dost now despise, and feel what now thou wilt not believe. Death will bring such an argument as thou canst not answer; an argument that shall effectually confute thy cavils against the word and ways of God, and all thy self-conceited dotages: and then how soon will thy mind be changed! Then be an unbeliever if thou canst! Stand then to all thy former words which thou wast wont to

utter against the Scriptures, or against a holy and heavenly life! Make good that cause then before the Lord, which thou wast wont to plead against thy teachers, and against the people that feared God. Then stand to thy old opinions, and contemptuous thoughts of the diligence of the saints. Make ready now thy strongest reasons, and stand up then before the Judge, and plead like a man, for thy fleshly, thy worldly, and ungodly life; but know that thou must have one to plead with thee, that will not be outfaced by thee, nor so easily put off as we thy fellow-creatures. O poor deceived, wretched soul! there is nothing but a slender veil of flesh betwixt thee and that amazing sight, which will quickly silence thee and turn thy tune, and make thee of another mind! As soon as death has drawn this curtain, thou shalt see that which will quickly leave thee speechless. And how quickly will that day and hour come! When thou hast had but a few more merry hours, and but a few more pleasant draughts and morsels, and a little more of the honours and riches of the world, thy portion will be spent, and thy pleasures ended, and all is then gone that thou settest thy heart upon; of all that thou soldest thy Saviour and salvation for, there is nothing left but the heavy reckoning. As a thief that sits merrily spending the money in an ale-house which he hath stolen, when men are riding in post haste to apprehend him; so it is with you: while you are drowned in cares or fleshly pleasures, and making merry with your own shame, death is coming in post haste to seize upon you, and carry your souls to such a place and state, as now you little know or think of. Suppose when you are bold and busy in your sin, that a messenger were but coming post from London to apprehend you, and take away your life; though you saw him not, yet if you knew of his coming it would mar your mirth, and you would be thinking of the haste he makes, and hearkening when he knocketh at your door. Oh that ye could but see what haste death makes, though yet it hath not overtaken you! No post so swift! No messenger more sure! As sure as the sun will be with you in the morning, though it hath many

thousand and hundred thousand miles to go in the night, so sure will death be quickly with you; and then where is your sport and pleasure? Then will you jest and brave it out? Then will you jeer at them that warned you? Then is it better to be a believing saint, or a sensual worldling? And then whose shall all those things be that you have gathered? Luke xii. 19-21. Do you not observe that days and weeks are quickly gone, and nights and mornings come apace, and speedily succeed each other? You sleep, but "your damnation slumbereth not;" you linger, "but your judgment this long time lingereth not," 2 Pet. ii. 3-5; to which you are reserved for punishment, 2 Pet. ii. 8, 9. "Oh that you were wise to understand this, and that you did consider your latter end!" Deut. xxxii. 20. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear" the call of God in this day of his salvation.

O careless sinners, that you did but know the love that you unthankfully neglect, and the preciousness of the blood of Christ which you despise! Oh that you did but know the riches of the gospel! Oh that you did but know a little the certainty, and the glory, and blessedness of that everlasting life, which now you will not set your hearts upon, nor be persuaded first and diligently to seek! Heb. xi. 6; xii. 28; Matt. vi. 13. Did you but know the endless life with God which you now neglect, how quickly would you cast away your sin! how quickly would you change your mind and life, your course and company, and turn the streams of your affections, and lay out your care another way! how resolutely would you scorn to yield to such temptations as now deceive you, and carry you away! how zealously would you bestir yourselves for that most blessed life! how earnest would you be with God in prayer! how diligent in hearing, learning, and inquiring! how serious in meditating on the laws of God! Psal. i. 2. how fearful of sinning in thought, word, or deed! and how careful to please God and grow in holiness! Oh what a changed people you would be! And why should not the certain word of God be believed, and prevail with you, which openeth to you

these glorious and eternal things? Yea, let me tell you, that even here upon earth, you little know the difference between the life you refuse and the life you choose. The sanctified are conversing with God, when you scarce dare think of him, and when you are conversing but with earth and flesh; their conversation is in heaven, when you are utter strangers to it, and your belly is your god, and you are minding earthly things, Phil. iii. 18-20. They are seeking after the face of God, when you seek for nothing higher than this world. They are busily laying out for an endless life, where they shall be equal with the angels, Luke xx. 36, when you are taken up with a shadow, and a transitory thing of nought. How low and base is your earthly, fleshly, sinful life, in comparison of the noble, spiritual life of true believers! Many a time have I looked on such men with grief and pity, to see them trudge about the world, and spend their lives, care, and labour, for nothing but a little food and raiment, or a little fading pelf, or fleshly pleasures, or empty honours, as if they had no higher thing to mind. What difference is there between the lives of these men, and of the beasts that perish, that spend their time in working, and eating, and living, but that they may live? They taste not of the inward heavenly pleasures which believers taste and live upon. I had rather have a little of their comfort, which the forethoughts of their heavenly inheritance doth afford them, though I had all their scorn and sufferings with it, than to have all your pleasures and treacherous prosperities; I would not have one of your secret gripes and pangs of conscience, dark and dreadful thoughts of death and the life to come, for all that ever the world hath done for you, or all that you should reasonably hope that it should do. If I were in your unconverted, carnal state, and knew but what I know, believed but what I now believe, methinks my life would be a foretaste of hell. How oft should I be thinking of the terrors of the Lord, and of the dismal day that is **hasting** on! Sure death and hell would be still before me. I should think of them by day, and dream of them by night; I should lie down in fear, and rise in terror, and live

in anguish, lest death should come before I was converted : I should have small felicity in any thing that I possessed, and little pleasure in any company, and little joy in any thing in the world, as long as I knew myself to be under the curse and wrath of God : I should still be afraid of hearing that voice, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee," Luke xii. 20. And that fearful sentence would be written upon my conscience, "Verily there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked," Isa. xlviii. 22 ; lvii. 21. O poor sinners ! it is a more joyful life than this that you might live, if you were but willing, but truly willing to hearken to Christ, and to come home to God. You might then draw near to God with boldness, and call him your Father, and comfortably trust him with your souls and bodies. If you look upon promises, you may say, They are all mine ; if upon the curse, you may say, From this I am delivered. When you read the law, you may see what you are saved from : when you read the gospel, you may see him that redeemed you, and see the course of his love, and holy life, and sufferings, and trace him in his temptations, tears, and blood, in the work of your salvation. You may see death conquered, and heaven opened, and your resurrection and glorification provided for, in the resurrection and glorification of your Lord. If you look on the saints, you may say, They are my brethren and companions. If on the unsanctified, you may rejoice to think that you are saved from that state. If you look upon the heavens, the sun, and moon, and stars innumerable, you may think and say, My Father's face is infinitely more glorious ; it is higher matters that he hath prepared for his saints. Yonder is but the outward court of heaven. The blessedness that he hath promised me, is so much higher, that flesh and blood cannot behold it. If you think of the grave, you may remember that the glorified Spirit, a living Head, and a loving Father, have all so near relation to your dust, that it cannot be forgotten or neglected ; but will more certainly revive than the plants and flowers in the spring ; because the soul is still alive, that is the root of the body, and Christ is alive, that is the

root of both. Even death, which is the king of fears, may be remembered and entertained with joy, as being the day of your deliverance from the remnants of sin and sorrow, and the day which you believed, and hoped, and waited for, when you shall see the blessed things which you have heard of, and shall find by present joyful experience, what it was to choose the better part, and be a sincere believing saint. What say you, sirs? is not this a more delightful life, to be assured of salvation, and ready to die, than to live as the ungodly, that have their hearts "overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day comes upon them unawares?" Luke xxi. 34, 36. Might you not live a comfortable life, if once you were made the heirs of heaven, and sure to be saved when you leave the world? O look about you then, and think what you do, and cast not away such hopes as these for very nothing. The flesh and world can give you no such hopes or comforts.

And besides all the misery that you bring upon yourselves, you are the troublers of others as long as you are unconverted. You trouble magistrates to rule you by their laws. You trouble ministers, by resisting the light and guidance which they offer you; your sin and misery is the greatest grief and trouble to them in the world. You trouble the commonwealth, and draw the judgments of God upon us: it is you that most disturb the holy peace and order of the churches, and hinder our union and reformation, and are the shame and trouble of the churches where you intrude, and of all the places where you are. Ah, Lord! how heavy and sad a case is this, that even in England, where the gospel doth abound above any other nation in the world; where teaching is so plain and common, and all the helps we can desire are at hand; when the sword hath been hewing us, and judgment hath run as a fire through the land; when deliverances have relieved us, and so many admirable mercies have engaged us to God, and to the gospel, and to a holy life; that yet after all this our cities, and towns, and counties, shall abound with multitudes of unsanctified men, and swarm with so much sensuality, as everywhere to our

grief we see. One would have thought, that after all this light, and all this experience, and all these judgments and mercies of God, the people of this nation should have joined together, as one man, to turn to the Lord; and should have come to their godly teachers, and lamented all their former sins, and desired them to join with them in public humiliation to confess their sins openly, and beg pardon of them from the Lord, and should have craved instruction for the time to come, and be glad to be ruled by the Spirit within, and the ministers of Christ without, according to the word of God. One would think, that after such reason and scripture evidence as they hear, and after all these means and mercies, there should not be an ungodly person left among us, or a worldling, or a drunkard, or a hater of reformation, or an enemy to holiness, be found in all our towns or counties. If we be not all agreed about some ceremonies or forms of government, one would think that, before this, we should have been all agreed to live a holy and heavenly life, in obedience to God, his word and ministers, and in love and peace with one another. But, alas! how far are our people from this course! Most of them, in most places, do set their hearts on earthly things, and seek not first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, but look at holiness as a needless thing: their families are prayerless, or else a few heartless, lifeless words must serve instead of hearty, fervent, daily prayer; their children are not taught the knowledge of Christ, and the covenant of grace, nor brought up in the nurture of the Lord, though they falsely promised this in their baptism. They instruct not their servants in the matters of salvation; but so their work be done they care not. There are more oaths, and curses, and ribald and railing speeches in their families, than gracious words that tend to edification. How few are the families that fear the Lord, and inquire after his word and ministers, how they should live, and what they should do; and are willing to be taught and ruled, and that heartily look after everlasting life! And those few that God hath made so happy, are commonly the by-word of their neigh-

bours ; when we see some live in drunkenness, and some in pride and worldliness, and most of them have little care of their salvation, though the cause be gross, and past all controversy, yet will they hardly be convinced of their misery, and more hardly recovered and reformed ; but when we have done all that we are able, to save them from their sins, we leave them, most of them, as we find them. And if, according to the law of God, we cast them out of the communion of the church, when they have obstinately rejected all our admonitions, they rage at us as if we were their enemies, and their hearts are filled with malice against us, and they will sooner set themselves against the Lord, and his laws, and church, and ministers, than against their deadly sins. This is the doleful case of England ; we have magistrates that countenance the ways of godliness, and a happy opportunity for unity and reformation is before us ; and faithful ministers long to see the right ordering of the church, and of the ordinances of God ; but the power of sin in our people doth frustrate almost all. Nowhere almost can a faithful minister set up the unquestionable discipline of Christ, or put back the most scandalous, impenitent sinners from the communion of the church, and participation of the sacrament, but the most of the people rail at them, and revile them ; as if these ignorant, careless souls were wiser than their teachers, or than God himself ; and fitter to rule the church than they. And thus in the day of our visitation, when God calls upon us to reform his church, though magistrates seem willing, and faithful ministers are willing, yet are the multitude of the people still unwilling ; and sin hath so blinded them, and hardened their hearts, that even in these days of light and grace, they are the obstinate enemies of light and grace, and will not be brought by the calls of God to see their folly, and know what is for their good. Oh that the people of England knew, “ at least in this their day, the things that belong unto their peace, before they are hid from their eyes !” Luke xix. 42. O foolish and miserable souls ! Gal. iii. 1, who hath bewitched your minds into such madness, and your hearts into such deadness, that you

should be such mortal enemies to yourselves, and go on so obstinately towards damnation, that neither the word of God nor the persuasions of men can change your minds, or hold your hands, or stop you till you are past remedy? Well, sinner! this life will not last always; this patience will not wait upon you still. Do not think that you shall abuse your Maker and Redeemer, and serve his enemies, and debase your souls, and trouble the world, and wrong the church, and reproach the godly, and grieve your teachers, and hinder reformation, and all this upon free cost. You know not yet what this must cost you, but you must shortly know, when the righteous God shall take you in hand, who will handle you in another manner than the sharpest magistrates or the plainest dealing pastors did, unless you prevent the everlasting torments by a sound conversion, and a speedy obeying the call of God. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear," while mercy hath a voice to call.

One desperate objection (which I have touched in the sequel, but with too much brevity) I find sticks close to the hearts of many ungodly men. They think that God doth not so much care what men think, or say, or do, as we persuade them; and therefore they care so little themselves. For the convincing of such atheistical men as these, I shall propound the following questions:—

1. Dost thou think God careth whether thou be a man or not? If not, who made thee, and preserved thee? If he do, then sure he careth whether thou behave thyself as a man. No man is so foolish as to make any instrument, build a house, or a ship, and not care, when he hath done, whether it be good for the use he made it. Do not for shame, then, impute such folly to the God of wisdom, as if he made so noble a creature as man, and endowed him with such noble faculties, and all for nothing, and careth not what becometh of him when he hath done. Why should God give thee a mind that can know him, and a heart that can love him, when he careth not whether thou know him, and love him, or not? Do not you see, that, in the course of nature, every thing is fitted to its use? The beasts know not God,

nor are capable of loving him, because they were made for no such use ; but thy capacity shews that thou wast made for God, and for a life to come.

2. Dost thou think that God is everywhere present, and infinite, and all-sufficient? If not, thou dost not believe that he is God ; and it is unreasonable to imagine, that God hath made a world that is greater, and more extensive or comprehensive, than himself ! For none can communicate more than he hath. But if thou art forced to confess that God is everywhere, and as sufficient for every single man, as if he had never another creature to regard, thou must needs confess then that he is not careless of the hearts and ways of the sons of men ; for they are things that are still before his eyes. It is base and blasphemous thoughts of God, as if he were limited, absent, or insufficient, that makes men think him so regardless of their hearts and ways.

3. Dost thou think that God careth what becomes of thy body? whether thou be sick or well? whether thou live or die? If not, then how camest thou by thy life, and health, and mercies? If they came from any other fountain, tell us from whence. Is it not to God that thou prayest for thy life and health? Darest thou say to him, I will not depend upon thee? I will not be beholden to thee for the life and mercies of another day? If so, then thou art a blind atheist. But if thou thinkest he cares for thy body, canst thou think he cares not more for thy soul? If he must regard to furnish thee with mercies, he will surely have a regard whether thou love and live to him that gave them.

4. Dost thou believe that God is the Governor of the world, or not? If not, then there can be no rightful government. For as no justice of peace can have a power, but from the sovereign ; so no sovereign can have power, but from God ; nor be a lawful governor, but under him : and then all the world would be turned into confusion. But if thou must needs confess that God is the Governor of the world, what an unwise, unrighteous governor wouldst thou make him, if thou thinkest that he regardeth not the

hearts and ways of those whom he doth govern ! This still is but to deny him to be God

5. If God do not care so much what is in our hearts, or what we do, why then should he make a law for our hearts, and words, and ways ? Would he command us that which he doth not care for ? Would he so strictly forbid sin, if he were indifferent whether we sin or not ? Would he promise eternal life to the holy and obedient, if he cared not whether we be holy and obedient or no ? Would he threaten hell to all that are ungodly, if he cared not whether we are godly or not ? Darest thou say, that the almighty, holy God is fain to rule the world by a lie, and to deceive men into obedience ? Yea, the very law of nature itself doth contain not only precepts of our duty, but the hopes and fears of the life to come, without which the world could not be governed ; and certainly they are no deceits, by which an infinite wisdom, and power, and goodness, doth govern the world.

6. If God did not much regard our hearts and lives, why doth he make all the world to be our servants ? Doth he give us the sun, and moon, and stars, the earth, and all creatures to attend us, and serve us with their lives and virtues, and yet doth he not care for our hearts or service ? This is as foolish as to say, that he hath made all the world in vain, and careth not for it, now he hath made it.

7. If he cared not for the frame of our hearts and lives, he would not have sent his Son to redeem us, and to cleanse us from iniquity, and sanctify us a peculiar people to himself, Tit. ii. 14. Surely the price that was paid for sinners, and the wonderful design of God in our redemption, doth shew that he makes not light of sin, and that he is wonderfully in love with holiness.

8. If God did not regard our hearts and lives, he would not have made it the office of his ministers to call us daily to repentance and a holy life ; nor commanded them to make such a stir with sinners to win them unto God : he would not have appointed all his ordinances, public and private,

also to this end. Doth God command all this ado for a thing he regards not?

9. Nor would^d he punish the world with hell hereafter, or so many dreadful judgments here, as thousands feel, if he cared not what they think or do. Methinks, men that are so often groaning under his rod, should feel that he looks after their hearts and ways.

10. And how can the Holy Ghost be our Sanctifier, if God be so indifferent, whether we be clean or unclean? Dare you think that the Holy Ghost doth take upon him a needless work?

11. Methinks you might perceive, even in the malice of the tempter, that God is holy, and hateth iniquity; and his word is true, that telleth us of the eternal punishment of sin. The Scripture tells us of the angels' fall, and that many of them are become devils by their sin, and are malicious enemies of man's salvation. And do you not easily perceive it to be true? How came they else to be such importunate tempters of men, which we feel, alas! by too much experience? Or if this evidence be not palpable enough to convince the infidel; how come they to make so many bargains with conjurers and witches, to draw them from God and salvation, as they have done? How come they to appear in terrible shapes to so many as they have done, and still upon designs that declare their own dejected, base condition, and their enmity to God and man, and their eager desire to engage men in a way of sin? If any infidel will not believe that really there have been witches and apparitions, and consequently that there are devils, who are miserable, malicious spirits, who by sin are cast out of the favour of God, and would draw men into their miserable case; let them come and reason the case with me, and I shall quickly tell them of so many sure and undeniable instances, and give them so much proof of the truth of it, as shall leave them nothing to say against it, unless they will still say, We will not believe: yea, so much, as that I will not be beholden to the vilest atheist or infidel to believe it,

if he will not quite renounce his reason, but give it leave to see the light.

12. Lastly, If yet you think that God (the Sovereign Ruler of the world, that is everywhere present, and preserveth all) doth care so little what men are, or what they do, whether they are holy or unholy, obedient or disobedient to his laws; then methinks that you yourselves, and all the rest of your fellow-creatures, should little care.

Two questions therefore I must propound to you :

1. Do not you care what men say of you, or do to you? Are you contented that men slander you, and abuse you, or set your houses or towns on fire, or destroy your cattle, or wives or children, and imprison, wound, or kill yourselves? If you will make a great matter what men say or do against you, can you be so mad (for it is no better) as to think that the omnipotent, holy God, should little regard what is said or done against himself, and against his servants, and that by such silly worms as men, that are his workmanship? Did not selfishness make you blind and partial, you would know that one sin against God deserves more punishment than ten thousand thousand times as much against such silly things as you. Do you make no matter of difference between a bad servant and a good? an obedient and disobedient child? a son that will lay down his life for you, and a son that longs for your death, that he may have your land? between a faithful friend and a deadly enemy? If you do not, you are not men, but something else in human shape. If you do, then you are somewhat worse than men, if yet you would have the blessed God to make no great difference between those that love him above all the world, and those that regard him not; between the holy and unholy soul.

And, 2. I would ask you whether you would have the rulers of the world to take care what men say or do, or would you not? If not, then you would have all the world turned loose, and you would have every man that is poorer than you, have leave to rob you; and every man that hateth

you, have leave to beat or kill you ; and every man that liketh your house, or lands, or goods, or cattle, to have leave to take them from you ; and every man defile your wives or daughters, that hath a mind to it ? And so we should see whither it is that infidelity leads men. But if you like not this, then you are most unreasonable, if you would have magistrates to be regardful of men's actions, and not God ; if magistrates must hang men for wronging you, and the eternal Majesty must not punish them for wronging him, and breaking his laws, which is infinitely a greater matter. As if you would have a constable punish men, and the king or judge to have no regard of it ; for kings are under God, as constables are under kings, and a thousandfold lower.

The truth is, wicked men are fallen so far from God to themselves, that they are as gods to themselves in their own esteem, and besides themselves they know no God ; and therefore any wrong that is done against them, or any good that is done for them, they would have regarded ; but the wrong and disobedience that is against God, they would have nothing made of it. And they have such narrow, blasphemous thoughts of God, as if he were a finite creature like themselves, that can be but in one place at once, that makes them so blaspheme his providence, and think he minds no good or evil, and will not regard the godly, or punish the ungodly, but were like the idols of the heathen, that have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, and hands without an executive power. But when the memorial book of God is opened, which is written for them that fear the Lord, and think upon his name ; and when the Lord shall say of them, " These are mine," as he is making up his jewels, and spareth them as a man spareth his son that serveth him ; then shall these infidels return to their wits, and the righteous shall return from their fears and sufferings, and shall decern between the righteous and the wicked, between those that serve God and those that serve him not, Mal. iii. 16-18.

Another objection I find most common in the mouths of the ungodly, especially of late years ; they say, We can do nothing without God ; we cannot have grace if God will not

give it us ; and if he will, we shall quickly turn : if he have not predestinated us, and will not turn us, how can we turn ourselves or be saved ? It is not in him that wills, or in him that runs. And thus they think they are excused.

I have answered this formerly, and in this book ; but let me now say this much. 1. Though you cannot cure yourselves, you can hurt and poison yourselves : it is God that must sanctify your hearts ; but who corrupted them ? Will you wilfully take poison, because you cannot cure yourselves ? Methinks you should the more forbear it : you should the more take heed of sinning, if you cannot mend what sin doth mar. 2. Though you cannot be converted without the special grace of God, yet you must know, that God giveth his grace in the use of his holy means which he hath appointed to that end ; and common grace may enable you to forbear your gross sinning, as to the outward act, and to use those means. Can you truly say that you do as much as you are able to do ? Are you not able to go by an ale-house door, or to shut your mouths and keep out the drink ? or to forbear the company that hardeneth you to sin ? Are you not able to go hear the word, and think of what you heard when you come home ? and to consider with yourselves of your own condition, and of everlasting things ? Are you not able to read good books from day to day, at least on the Lord's day, and to converse with those that fear the Lord ? You cannot say that you have done what you are able. 3. And therefore you must know that you can forfeit the grace and help of God by your wilful sinning or negligence, though you cannot, without grace, turn to God. If you will not do what you can, it is just with God to deny you that grace by which you might do more. 4. And for God's decrees, you must know that they separate not the end and means, but tie them together. God never decreed to save any but the sanctified, nor to damn any but the unsanctified. God doth as truly decree from everlasting whether your land this year shall be barren or fruitful, and just how long you shall live in the world, as he hath decreed whether you shall be saved or not. And yet you would think

that man but a fool that would forbear ploughing and sowing, and say, If God have decreed that my ground shall bear corn, it will bear whether I plough and sow or not. If God have decreed that I shall live, I shall live whether I eat or not ; but if he have not, it is not eating will keep me alive. Do you know how to answer such a man, or do you not ? If you do, then you know how to answer yourselves ; for the case is alike : God's decree is as peremptory about your bodies as your souls. If you do not, then try first these conclusions upon your bodies, before you venture to try them on your souls ; see first whether God will keep you alive without food or raiment, and whether he will give you corn without tillage and labour, and whether he will bring you to your journey's end without your travel or carriage ; and if you speed well in this, then try whether he will bring you to heaven without your diligent use of means, and sit down and say, We cannot sanctify ourselves.

And for the point of free-will, which you harp so long upon, divines are not so much disagreed about it as you imagine. Augustine as well as Pelagius, Calvin as well as Arminius, the Dominicans as well as the Jesuits, all do generally maintain, that man hath free-will. The orthodox say, that free-will is corrupted and disposed to evil. Epiphanius condemned Origen for saying, that man had lost the image of God, and makes it a point of heresy. And yet one may truly say, That man hath lost God's image ; and another may truly say, That he hath not lost it. For there is a twofold image of God in man : the one is natural, and that is our reason and free-will, and this is not lost ; the other is qualitative and ethical, and this is our holiness, and this is lost, and by grace restored. No man of brains denieth, that a man hath a will that is naturally free ; it is free from violence, and it is a self-determining principle ; but it is not free from evil dispositions. It is habitually averse to God and holiness, and inclined to earthly, fleshly things ; it is enslaved by a sinful bias. This, no man, methinks, that is a Christian, should deny ; and of the aged, I see not how an infidel can deny it. Alas, we easily confess to

you, that you have not this spiritual, moral free-will, which is but your right inclination, and your habitual willingness itself. If you had a will that were freed from wicked inclinations, I had no need to write such books as these to persuade you to be willing in a case which your own salvation lieth on. To the grief of our souls, we perceive, after all our preachings and persuasions, that the ungodly have not this spiritual free-will. But this is nothing but your willingness itself, and inclination to be willing; and therefore the want of it is so far from excusing you, that the more you want it (that is, the more you are wilful in sin) the worse you are, and the sorer will be your punishment. And our preaching and persuasions, and your hearing and considering, are the appointed means to get this moral power of freedom, that is, to make you truly willing.

Well, sirs, I have but three requests to you, and I have done: First, That you will seriously read over this small treatise (and if you have such that need it in your families, that you read it over and over to them: and if those that fear God would go now and then to their ignorant neighbours, and read this or some other book to them of this subject, they might be a means of winning of souls.) If we cannot entreat so small a labour of men for their own salvation, as to read such short instructions as these, they set little by themselves, and will most justly perish. Secondly, When you have read over this book, I would entreat you to go alone, and ponder a little what you have read, and bethink you, as in the sight of God, whether it be not true, and do not nearly touch your souls, and whether it be not time for you to look about you; and I also entreat that you will fall upon your knees and beseech the Lord that he will open your eyes to understand the truth, and turn your hearts to the love of God, and beg of him all that saving grace, that you have so long neglected, and follow it on from day to day, till your hearts be changed; and withal, that you will go to your pastors (that are set over you, to take care of the health and safety of your souls, as physicians do for the health of your bodies), and desire them to direct you what course to

take, and acquaint them with your spiritual estate, that you may have the benefit of their advice and ministerial help. Or if you have not a faithful pastor at home, make use of some other in so great a need. Thirdly, When by reading, consideration, prayer, and ministerial advice, you are once acquainted with your sin and misery, with your duty and remedy, delay not, but presently forsake your sinful company and courses, and turn unto God, and obey his call, and as you love your souls, take heed that you go not on against so loud a call of God, and against your own knowledge and conscience, lest it go worse with you in the day of judgment than with Sodom and Gomorrah. Inquire of God, as a man that is willing to know the truth, and not be a wilful cheater of his soul. Search the holy Scripture daily, and see whether these things be so or not; try impartially whether it be safer to trust heaven or earth; and whether it be better to follow God or man, the Spirit or the flesh; and better to live in holiness or sin; and whether an unsanctified estate be safe for you to abide in one day longer; and when you have found out which is best, resolve accordingly, and make your choice without any more ado. If you will be true to your own souls, and do not love everlasting torments, I beseech you, as from the Lord, that you will but take this reasonable advice. O what happy towns and countries, and what a happy nation might we have, if we could but persuade our neighbours to agree to such a necessary motion! What joyful men would all faithful ministers be, if they could but see their people truly heavenly and holy! This would be the unity, the peace, the safety, the glory of our churches, the happiness of our neighbours, and the comfort of our souls. Then how comfortable should we preach absolution and peace to you, and deliver the sacraments, which are the seals of peace, to you. And with what love and joy might we live among you; at your death-bed, how boldly might we comfort and encourage your departing souls; and at your burial, how comfortably might we leave you in the grave, in expectation to meet your souls in heaven, and to see your bodies raised to that glory.

But if still the most of you will go on in a careless, ignorant, fleshly, worldly, or unholy life; and all our desires and labours cannot so far prevail as to keep you from the wilful damning of yourselves; we must then imitate our Lord, who delighteth himself in those few that are his jewels, and the little flock that shall receive the kingdom, when the most shall reap the misery which they sowed. In nature excellent things are few. The world hath not many suns or moons; it is but a little of the earth that is gold or silver; princes and nobles are but a small part of the sons of men. And it is no great number that are learned, judicious, or wise, here in this world. And therefore if the gate being strait, and the way narrow, there be but few that find salvation, yet God will have his glory and pleasure in those few. And when Christ "shall come with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, his coming will be glorified in his saints, and admired in all true believers," 2 Thess. i. 7-10.

And for the rest, as God the Father vouchsafed to create them, and God the Son disdained not to bear the penalty of their sins upon the cross; and did not judge such sufferings vain, though he knew that by refusing the sanctification of the Holy Ghost, they would finally destroy themselves; so we that are his ministers, though these be not gathered; judge not our labour wholly lost. See Isa. xlix. 5.

Reader, I have done with thee (when thou hast perused this book); but sin hath not yet done with thee (even those that thou thoughtest had been forgotten long ago), and Satan hath not yet done with thee (though now he be out of sight), and God hath not yet done with thee, because thou wilt not be persuaded to have done with deadly, reigning sin. I have written thee this persuasive, as one that is going into another world, where the things are seen that I here speak of, and as one that knoweth thou must shortly be there thyself. As ever thou wouldst meet me with comfort before the Lord that made us; as ever thou wilt

escape the everlasting plagues prepared for the final neglecters of salvation, and for all that are not sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and love not the communion of the saints, as members of the holy catholic church; and as ever thou hopest to see the face of Christ the Judge, and of the majesty of the Father, with peace and comfort, to be received into glory, when thou art turned naked out of this world; I beseech thee, I charge thee, to hear and obey the call of God, and resolvedly to turn, that thou mayst live. But if thou wilt not, even when thou hast no true reason for it, but because thou wilt not; I summon thee, answer for it before the Lord, and require thee there to bear me witness I gave thee warning, and that thou wert not condemned for want of a call to turn and live, but because thou wouldst not believe it, and obey it; which also must be the testimony of thy serious monitor.

RICHARD BAXTER.

CALL TO THE UNCONVERTED

TO TURN AND LIVE.

" Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but that the wicked turn from his way and live : turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways ; for why will ye die. O house of Israel ! "—Ezekiel xxxiii. 11.

It hath been the astonishing wonder of many a man, as well as me, to read in the holy Scripture, how few will be saved, and that the greatest part even of those that are called, will be everlastingly shut out of the kingdom of heaven, and tormented with the devils in eternal fire. Infidels believe not this when they read it, and therefore must hereafter feel it. Those that do believe it, are forced to cry out with Paul, " Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! " Rom. xi. 13. But nature itself doth teach us all, to lay the blame of evil works upon the doers ; and therefore when we see any heinous thing done, a principle of justice doth provoke us to inquire after him that did it, that the evil of the work may return the evil of shame upon the author. If we saw a man killed and cut in pieces by the way, we should presently ask, Oh ! who did this cruel deed ? If the town were wilfully set on fire, you would ask, What wicked wretch did this ? So when we read that the most will be fire-brands of hell for ever, we must needs think with ourselves, how comes this to pass ? And whom doth it belong

to? who is it that is so cruel as to be the cause of such a thing as this? And we can meet with few that will own the guilt. It is indeed confessed by all, that Satan is the cause, but that doth not resolve the doubt, because he is not the principal cause. He doth not force men to sin, but tempt them to it, and leaves it to their own wills, whether they will do it or not. He doth not carry men to an ale-house, and force open their mouths, and pour in the drink; nor doth he hold them that they cannot go to God's service, nor doth he force their hearts from holy thoughts. It lieth, therefore, between God himself, and the sinner: one of them must needs be the principal cause of all this misery, whichever it is; for there is no other to cast it upon. And God disclaimeth it; he will not take it upon him. And the wicked disclaim it usually, and they will not take it upon them; and this is the controversy that is here managed in the text.

The Lord complaineth of the people, and the people think it belongeth to God: the same controversy is handled in chap. xviii. where, ver. 25, they plainly say, "that the way of the Lord is not equal." And God saith, "It is their ways that are not equal." So here they say, ver. 19, "If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how shall we then live?" As if they should say, If we must die and be miserable, how can we help it? as if it belonged not to them, but God. But God, in my text, doth clear himself of it, and telleth them how they may help it if they will, and persuadeth them to use the means: and if they will not be persuaded, he lets them know that it belongeth to themselves; and if this will not satisfy them, he will not therefore forbear to punish them. It is he that will be their Judge, and he will judge them according to their ways: they are no judges of him, or of themselves, as wanting authority, wisdom, and impartiality; nor is it their cavilling and quarrelling with God, that shall serve their turn, or save them from the execution of justice which they murmur at.

The words of this verse contain, 1. God's purgation or clearing of himself from the blame of their destruction. This

he doth, not by disowning his law, that the "wicked shall die;" nor by disowning his judgments and execution according to that law, or by giving them any hope that the law shall not be executed; but by professing that it is not their death that he takes pleasure in, but their returning rather, that they may live. And this he confirmeth to them by his oath.

2. An express exhortation to the wicked to return; wherein God doth not only command, but persuade and condescend also to reason the case with them, Why will they die? The direct end of this exhortation is, that they may turn and live. The secondary, or reserved ends, upon supposition that this is not attained, are these two: First, To convince them by the means which he used, that it belongeth not to God if they be miserable. Secondly, To convince them from their manifest wilfulness, in rejecting all his commands and persuasions, that it belongeth to themselves, and they die even because they will die.

The substance of the text doth lie in these observations following.

Doct. I. It is the unchangeable law of God, that wicked men must turn or die.

Doct. II. It is the promise of God, that the wicked shall live, if they will but turn.

Doct. III. God takes pleasure in men's conversion and salvation, but not in their death or damnation; he had rather they would return and live, than go on and die.

Doct. IV. This is a most certain truth, which because God would not have men to question, he hath confirmed it to them solemnly by his oath.

Doct. V. The Lord doth redouble his commands and persuasions to the wicked to turn.

Doct. VI. The Lord condescendeth to reason the case with them, and asketh the wicked, why they will die?

Doct. VII. If after all this, the wicked will not return, it belongeth not to God that they perish, but to themselves: their own wilfulness is the cause of their damnation; they therefore die because they will die.

Having laid the text open before your eyes in these plain

propositions, I shall next speak somewhat of each of them in order, though very briefly.

Doct. I. It is the unchangeable law of God, that wicked men must turn or die.

If you will believe God, believe this. There is but one of these two ways for every wicked man, either conversion or damnation. I know the wicked will hardly be persuaded, either of the truth or equity of this. No wonder if the guilty quarrel with the law. Few men are apt to believe that which they would not have to be true, and fewer would have that to be true, which they apprehend to be against them. But it is not quarrelling with the law, or with the judge, that will save the malefactor: believing and regarding the law might have prevented his death; but denying and accusing it, will but hasten it. If it were not so, a hundred would bring their reason against the law, for one that would bring his reason to the law; and men would rather choose to give their reasons why they should not be punished, than to hear the commands and reasons of their governors which require them to obey. The law was not made for you to judge, but that you might be ruled and judged by it. But if there be any so blind as to venture to question either the truth or justice of the law of God, I shall briefly give you that evidence of both, which, methinks, would satisfy a reasonable man. And first, if you doubt whether this be the word of God or not, besides a hundred other texts, you may be satisfied by these few: "Verily, I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xviii. 3. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new," 2 Cor. v. 17. "Ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him," Col. iii. 9, 10. "Without holiness no man shall see God," Heb. xii. 14. "So then they that

are in the flesh cannot please God. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," Rom. viii. 8, 9. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature," Gal. vi. 15. "According unto his abundant grace, he hath begotten us again to a lively hope," 1 Pet. i. 3. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever," ver. 23. "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envyings, and evil-speakings, as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby," 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God," Psal. ix. 17. "And the Lord loveth the righteous; but the wicked his soul hateth," Psal. xi. 4. As I need not stay to open these texts which are so plain, so I think I need not add any more of that multitude which speak the like. If thou be a man that dost believe the word of God, here is already enough to satisfy thee that the wicked must be converted or condemned. You are already brought so far, that you must either confess that this is true, or say plainly, you will not believe the word of God. And if once you be come to that last pass, there is but small hopes of you: look to yourselves as well as you can; for it is like you will not be long out of hell. You would be ready to fly in the face of him that should give you the lie; and yet dare you give the lie to God? But if you tell God plainly you will not believe him, blame him not if he never warn you more, or if he forsake you, and give you up as hopeless: for to what purpose should he warn you, if you would not believe him. Should he send an angel from heaven to you, it seems you would not believe, for an angel can speak but the word of God; and if an angel should bring you any other gospel, you are not to receive it, but to hold him accursed, Gal. i. 8. And surely there is no angel to be believed before the Son of God, who came from the Father to bring us this doctrine. If he be not to be believed, then all the angels in heaven are not to be believed. And if you stand on these terms

with God, I shall leave you till he deal with you in a more convincing way. God hath a voice that will make you hear! Though he entreat you to hear the voice of his gospel, he will make you hear the voice of his condemning sentence, without entreaty. We cannot make you believe against your wills; but God will make you feel against your wills. But let us hear what reason you have, why you will not believe this word of God, which tells us, that the wicked must be converted or condemned. I know your reason; it is because that you judge it unlikely that God should be so unmerciful; you think it cruelty to damn men everlastingly for so small a thing as a sinful life. And this leads us up to the second thing, which is to justify the equity of God in his laws and judgment.

And first, I think you will not deny but that it is most suitable to an immortal soul, to be ruled by laws that promise an immortal reward, and threaten an endless punishment. Otherwise the law should not be suited to the nature of the subject, who will not be fully ruled by any lower means than the hopes or fears of everlasting things: as it is in case of temporal punishment. If a law were now made, that the most heinous crimes should be punished with a hundred years' captivity, this might be of some efficacy, as being equal to our lives. But if there had been no other penalties before the flood, when men lived eight or nine hundred years, it would not have been sufficient, because men would know that they might have so many hundred years' impunity afterward. So it is in our present case.

2. I suppose you will confess, that the promise of an endless and inconceivable glory, is not unsuitable to the wisdom of God, or the case of man. And why then should you not think so of the threatening of an endless and unspeakable misery?

3. When you find it in the word of God, that so it is, and so it will be, do you think yourselves fit to contradict this word? Will you call your Maker to the bar, and examine his word upon the accusation of falsehood? Will you sit upon him, and judge him by the law of your conceits?

Are you wiser, and better, and more righteous than he? Must the God of heaven come to school to you to learn wisdom? Must Infinite Wisdom learn of folly; and Infinite Goodness be corrected by a swinish sinner, that cannot keep himself an hour clean? Must the Almighty stand at the bar of a worm? Oh horrid arrogance of senseless dust! Shall every mole, or clod, or dunghill, accuse the sun of darkness, and undertake to illuminate the world? Where were you when the Almighty made the laws, that he did not call you to his counsel? Surely he made them before you were born, without desiring your advice, and you came into the world too late for to reverse them. If you could have done so great a work, you should have stepped out of your nothingness, and have contradicted Christ when he was on earth, or Moses before him, or have saved Adam and his sinful progeny from the threatening death, that so there might have been no need of Christ. And what if God withdraw his patience and sustentation, and let you drop into hell while you are quarrelling with his words, will you then believe that there is a hell?

4. If sin be such an evil that it required the death of Christ for its expiation, no wonder if it deserve our everlasting misery.

5. And if the sins of the devils deserved an endless torment, why not also the sins of men?

6. And methinks you should perceive that it is not possible for the best of men, much less for the wicked, to be competent judges of the desert of sin. Alas! we are both blind and partial. You can never know fully the desert of sin, till you fully know the evil of sin; and you can never fully know the evil of sin, till you fully know, 1. The excellency of the soul which it deformeth. 2. And the excellency of holiness which it doth obliterate. 3. And the reason and the excellency of the law which it violateth. And, 4. The excellency of the glory which it doth despise. And, 5. The excellency and office of reason which it treadeth down. 6. No, nor till you know the infinite excellency, almightiness, and holiness of that God, against whom it is

committed. When you fully know all these, you shall fully know the desert of sin. Besides, you know that the offender is too partial to judge the law, or the proceedings of his judge. We judge by feeling, which binds our reason. We see in common worldly things, that most men think the cause is right which is their own, and that all is wrong that is done against them; and let the most wise, or just, or impartial friends persuade them to the contrary, and it is all in vain. There are few children but think the father unmerciful, or that he dealeth hardly with them, if he whip them. There is scarce the vilest, swinish wretch, but thinketh the church doth wrong him, if they excommunicate him; or scarce a thief or murderer that is hanged, but would accuse the law and judge of cruelty, if that would serve his turn.

7. Can you think that an unholy soul is fit for heaven? Alas! they cannot love God here, nor do him any service which he can accept. They are contrary to God, they loathe that which he most loveth, and love that which he abhorreth. They are incapable of that imperfect communion with him, which his saints here do partake of. How then can they live in that perfect love of him, and full delights and communion with him, which is the blessedness of heaven? You do not accuse yourselves of unmercifulness, if you make not your enemy your bosom counsellor; or if you take not your swine to bed and board with you; no, nor if you take away their life, though they never sinned. And yet will you blame the absolute Lord, the most wise and gracious Sovereign of the world, if he condemn the unconverted man to perpetual misery.

Use. I beseech you now, all that love your souls, that instead of quarrelling with God, and with his word, you will presently stoop to it, and use it for your good. All you that are yet unconverted in this assembly, take this as the undoubted truth of God; you must ere long be converted or condemned, there is no other way but turn or die. When God, that cannot lie, hath told you this, when you hear from the Maker and Judge of the world, it is time for

him that hath ears to hear ; by this time you may see what you have to trust to. You are but dead and damned men, except you will be converted. Should I tell you otherwise, I should but deceive you with a lie. Should I hide this from you, I should undo you, and be guilty of your blood, as the verses before my text assure me, ver. 8, " When I say to the wicked man, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die ; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand." You see then, though this be a rough, unwelcome doctrine, it is such as we must preach and you must hear. It is easier to hear of hell than feel it. If your necessities did not require it, we should not gall your tender ears with truths that seem so harsh and grievous. Hell would not be so full, if people were but willing to know their case, and to hear and think of it. The reason why so few escape it, is, because they strive not to enter in at the strait gate of conversion, and to go the narrow way of holiness while they have time ; and they strive not, because they be not awakened to a lively feeling of the danger they are in ; and they be not awakened, because they are loth to hear or think of it ; and that is partly through foolish tenderness, and carnal self-love, and partly because they do not well believe the word that threateneth it. If you will not thoroughly believe this truth, methinks the weight of it should force you to remember it, and it should follow you and give you no rest till you are converted. If you had but once heard this word, by the voice of an angel, Thou must be converted or condemned ; turn or die ! would it not stick in your mind, and haunt you night and day ? So that in your sinning you would remember it, as if the voice were still in your ears, Turn or die ! Oh happy were your souls, if it might thus work with you, and never be forgotten, or let you alone till it hath driven home your hearts to God. But if you will cast it out by forgetfulness or unbelief, how can it work to your conversion and salvation ? But take this with you, to your sorrow, though you may put this out of your minds, you cannot put it out of the

Bible ; but there it will stand as a sealed truth, which you shall experimentally know for ever, that there is no other way but turn or die.

Oh what is the matter then that the hearts of sinners be not pierced with such a weighty truth ! A man would think now that every unconverted soul that hears these words should be pricked to the heart, and think with themselves, This is my own case ; and never be quiet till they found themselves converted. Believe it, sirs, this drowsy, careless temper will not last long. Conversion and condemnation are both of them awakening things ; and one of them will make you feel ere long. I can foretell it as truly as if I saw it with my eyes, that either grace or hell will shortly bring these matters to the quick, and make you say, What have I done ? What foolish, wicked courses have I taken ? The scornful and stupid state of sinners will last but a little while : as soon as they either turn or die, the presumptuous dream will be at an end, and then their wits and feeling will return.

But I foresee there are two things that are like to harden the unconverted, and make me lose all my labour, except they can be taken out of the way : and that is, the misunderstanding of those two words, the wicked, and turn. Some will think with themselves, it is true, the wicked must turn or die ; but what is that to me ? I am not wicked, though I am a sinner, as all men be. Others will think, it is true that we must turn from our evil ways ; but I am turned long ago, I hope this is not now to do. And thus, while wicked men think they are not wicked, but are already converted, we lose all our labour in persuading them to turn. I shall therefore, before I go any further, tell you here who are meant by the wicked, and who they be that must turn or die, and also what is meant by turning ; and who they be that are truly converted ; and this I have purposely reserved for this place, preferring the method that fits my end.

And here you may observe, that in the sense of the text, a wicked man and a converted man are contraries. No man

is a wicked man that is converted, and no man is a converted man that is wicked ; so that to be a wicked man, and to be an unconverted man, is all one. And therefore in opening one, we shall open both.

Before I can tell you what either wickedness or conversion is, I must go to the bottom, and fetch up the matter from the beginning.

It pleased the great Creator of the world to make three sorts of living creatures. Angels he made pure spirits without flesh, and therefore he made them only for heaven, and not to dwell on earth. Beasts were made flesh without immortal souls ; and therefore they were made only for earth, and not for heaven. Man is of a middle nature, between both, as partaking of both flesh and spirit ; and therefore he was made both for heaven and earth. But as his flesh is made to be but a servant to his spirit, so is he made for earth, but has his passage or way to heaven, and not that this should be his home or happiness. The blessed state that man was made for, was to behold the glorious majesty of the Lord, and to praise him among his holy angels, and to love him, and be filled with his love for ever. And as this was the end that man was made for, so God did give him means that were fitted to the attaining of it. These means were principally two. First, The right inclination and disposition of the mind of man. Secondly, The right ordering of his life and practice. For the first, God suited the disposition of man to his end ; giving him such knowledge of God, as was fit for his present state, and a heart disposed and inclined to God in holy love. But yet he did not fix or confirm him in this condition ; but having made him a free agent, he left him in the hands of his own free-will. For the second, God did that which belonged to him ; that is, he gave man a perfect law, requiring him to continue in the love of God, and perfectly to obey him. By the wilful breach of this law, man did not only forfeit his hopes of everlasting life, but also turned his heart from God, and fixed it on these lower, fleshly things, and hereby did blot out the spiritual image of God from his soul. So

that man did both fall short of the glory of God, which was his end, and put himself out of the way by which he should have attained it; and this, both as to the frame of his heart and of his life. The holy inclination and love of his soul to God, he lost; and instead of it, he contracted an inclination and love to the pleasing of his flesh, or carnal self, by earthly things; growing strange to God, and acquainted with the creature: and the course of his life was suited to the bent and inclination of his heart; he lived to his carnal self, and not to God; he sought the creature for the pleasing of his flesh, instead of seeking to please the Lord. With this nature or corrupt inclination, we are all now born into the world; for "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Job xiv. 4. As a lion hath a fierce and cruel nature, before he doth devour, and as an adder hath a venomous nature before she stings, so in our very infancy we have those sinful natures or inclinations, before we think, or speak, or do amiss. And hence springeth all the sin of our lives. And not only so, but when God hath of his mercy provided us a remedy, even the Lord Jesus Christ, to be the Saviour of our souls, and bring us back to God again, we naturally love our present state, and are loth to be brought out of it, and therefore are set against the means of our recovery; and though custom hath taught us to thank Christ for his good will, yet carnal self persuadeth us to refuse his remedies, and to desire to be excused when we are commanded to take the medicines which he offereth, and are called to forsake all, and follow him to God and glory.

I pray you read over this leaf again, and mark it: for in these few words you have a true description of our natural state, and consequently of a wicked man. For every man that is in this state of corrupted nature, is a wicked man, and in a state of death.

By this also you are prepared to understand what it is to be converted; to which end you must further know, that the mercy of God, not willing that man should perish in his sin, provided a remedy, by causing his Son to take

our nature, and being in one person God and man, to become a Mediator between God and man ; and by dying for our sins on the cross, to ransom us from the curse of God, and the power of the devil : and having thus redeemed us, the Father hath delivered us into his hands as his own. Hereupon the Father and the Mediator do make a new law and covenant for man. Not like the first, which gave life to none but the perfectly obedient, and condemned man for every sin ; but Christ hath made a law of grace, or a promise of pardon and everlasting life to all that by true repentance, and by faith in Christ, are converted unto God. Like an act of oblivion, which is made by a prince to a company of rebels, on condition they will lay down their arms, and come in, and be loyal subjects for the time to come.

But because the Lord knoweth that the heart of man is grown so wicked, that, for all this, men will not accept of the remedy if they be left to themselves ; therefore the Holy Ghost hath undertaken it as his office to inspire the apostles, and seal up the Scripture by miracles and wonders, and to illuminate and convert the souls of the elect.

So that by this much you see, that as there are three Persons in the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ; so all of these Persons have their several works, which are eminently ascribed to them.

The Father's works were, to create us, to rule us as his rational creatures by the law of nature, and judge us thereby ; and in mercy to provide us a Redeemer when we were lost ; and to send his Son, and accept his ransom.

The works of the Son for us were these : to ransom and redeem us by his sufferings and righteousness, to give out the promise or law of grace, and rule and judge the world as their Redeemer, on terms of grace ; and to make intercession for us, that the benefits of his death may be communicated ; and to send the Holy Ghost (which the Father also doth by the Son.)

The works of the Holy Ghost for us are these : to indite the holy Scriptures, by inspiring and guiding the prophets

and apostles ; and sealing the word by his miraculous gifts and works ; and the illuminating and exciting the ordinary ministers of the gospel ; and so enabling them, and helping them to publish that word, and by the same word illuminating and converting the souls of men. So that as you could not have been reasonable creatures if the Father had not created you ; nor have had any access to God if the Son had not redeemed you ; so neither can you have a part in Christ, or be saved, except the Holy Ghost do sanctify you.

So that by this time you may see the several causes of this work. The Father sendeth the Son ; the Son redeemeth us, and maketh the promise of grace ; the Holy Ghost inditeth and sealeth this gospel ; the apostles are the secretaries of the Spirit, to write it ; the preachers of the gospel are the heralds to proclaim it, and persuade men to obey it ; and the Holy Ghost doth make their preaching effectual, by opening the hearts of men to entertain it. And all this to repair the image of God upon the soul, and to set the heart upon God again, and take it off the creature and carnal self, to which it is revolted, and so turn the current of this life into a heavenly course, which before was earthly ; and all this by the entertainment of Christ by faith, who is the Physician of the soul.

By this which I have said, you may see what it is to be wicked, and what it is to be unconverted. Which, I think, will be yet plainer to you, if I describe them as consisting of their several parts : and for the first, A wicked man may be known by these three things :

First, He is one that placeth his chief content on earth ; and loveth the creature more than God ; and his fleshly prosperity above the heavenly felicity : he savoureth the things of the flesh, but neither discerneth nor savoureth the things of the Spirit ; though he will say that heaven is better than earth, yet doth he not really so esteem it to himself. If he might be sure of earth, he would let go heaven, and had rather stay here than be removed thither. A life of perfect holiness in the sight of God, and in his love, and praises for

ever in heaven, doth not find such liking with his heart as a life of health, and wealth, and honour here upon earth. And though he falsely profess that he loveth God above all, yet indeed he never felt the power of divine love within him, but his mind is more set on the world, or fleshly pleasures, than on God. In a word, whoever loveth earth above heaven, and fleshly prosperity more than God, is a wicked, unconverted man.

On the other side, a converted man is illuminated to discern the loveliness of God; and so far believeth the glory that is to be had with God, that his heart is taken up to it, and set more upon it than on any thing in this world. He had rather see the face of God, and live in his everlasting love and praises, than have all the wealth or pleasure of the world. He seeth that all things else are vanity, and nothing but God can fill the soul; and therefore let the world go which way it will, he layeth up his treasures and hopes in heaven; and for that he is resolved to let go all. As the fire doth mount upward, and the needle that is touched with the loadstone still turneth to the north, so the converted soul is inclined unto God. Nothing else can satisfy him; nor can he find any content and rest but in his love. In a word, all that are converted do esteem and love God better than all the world, and the heavenly felicity is dearer to them than their fleshly prosperity. The proof of what I have said you may find in these places of Scripture, Phil. iii. 18, 21; Matt. vi. 19-21; Col. iii. 1-4; Rom. viii. 3, 6-9, 18, 23; Psal. lxxiii. 25, 26.

Secondly, A wicked man is one that maketh it the principal business of his life to prosper in the world, and attain his fleshly ends. And though he may read and hear, and do much in the outward duties of religion, and forbear disgraceful sins; yet this is all but upon the bye, and he never makes it the trade and principal business of his life to please God and attain everlasting glory, but puts off God with the leavings of the world, and gives him no more service than the flesh can spare; for he will not part with all for heaven,

On the contrary, a converted man is one that makes it

the principal care and business of his life to please God, and to be saved; and takes all the blessings of this life but as accommodations in his journey towards another life, and useth the creature in subordination unto God: he loveth a holy life, and longeth to be more holy; he hath no sin but what he hateth, and longeth, and prayeth, and striveth to be rid of. The drift and bent of his life is for God; and if he sin, it is contrary to the very bent of his heart and life, and therefore he rises again, and lamenteth it, and dare not wilfully live in any known sin. There is nothing in this world so dear to him but he can give it up to God, and forsake it for him and the hopes of glory. All this you may see in Col. iii. 1-5; Matt. vi. 20, 33; Luke xviii. 22, 23, 29; xiv. 18, 24, 26, 27; Rom. viii. 13; Gal. v. 24; Luke xii. 21, &c.

Thirdly, The soul of a wicked man did never truly discern and relish the mystery of redemption, nor thankfully entertain an offered Saviour, nor is he taken up with the love of the Redeemer, nor willing to be ruled by him, as the Physician of his soul, that he may be saved from the guilt and power of his sins, and recovered unto God; but his heart is insensible of this unspeakable benefit, and is quite against the healing means by which he should be recovered. Though he may be willing to be carnally religious, yet he never resigned up his soul to Christ, and to the motions and conduct of his word and Spirit.

On the contrary, the converted soul having felt himself undone by sin; and perceiving that he hath lost his peace with God, and hopes of heaven; and is in danger of everlasting misery, doth thankfully entertain the tidings of redemption; and believing in the Lord Jesus as his only Saviour, resigneth up himself to him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He taketh Christ as the life of his soul, and liveth by him, and useth him as a salve for every sore, admiring the wisdom and love of God in his wonderful work of man's redemption. In a word, Christ doth even dwell in his heart by faith, and the life that he now liveth is by faith in the Son of God, who loved

him and gave himself for him. Yea, it is not so much he that liveth, as Christ in him. For these, see John i. 11, 12 ; iii. 19, 20 ; Rom. viii. 9 ; Phil. iii. 7-10 ; Gal. ii. 20 ; John xv. 2-4 ; 1 Cor. i. 20 ; ii. 2.

You see now in plain terms, from the word of God, who are the wicked, and who are the converted. Ignorant people think, that if a man be no swearer, nor curser, nor railer, nor drunkard, nor fornicator, nor extortioner, nor wrong any body in their dealings, and if they come to church, and say their prayers, these cannot be wicked men. Or if a man that hath been guilty of drunkenness, swearing, gaming, or the like vices, do but forbear them for the time to come, they think that this is a converted man. Others think, if a man that hath been an enemy, and a scorner of godliness, do but approve it, and join himself with those that are godly, and be hated for it by the wicked, as the godly are, that this needs must be a converted man. And some are so foolish as to think they are converted, by taking up some new and false opinion ; and falling into some dividing party, as baptists, quakers, papists, or such like. And some think, if they have but been affrighted by the fears of hell, and had convictions, and gripes of conscience, and thereupon have purposed and promised amendment, and taken up a life of civil behaviour, and outward religion, that this must needs be true conversion. And these are the poor deluded souls that are like to lose the benefit of all our persuasions. And when they hear that the wicked must turn or die, they think that this is not spoken of them ; for they are not wicked, but are turned already. And therefore it is, that Christ told some of the rulers of the Jews, who were more grave and civil than the common people, that "Publicans and harlots do go into the kingdom of God before them," Matt. xxi. 31. Not that a harlot or gross sinner can be saved without conversion, but because it was easier to make those gross sinners perceive their sin and misery, and the necessity of a change, when the civiler sort do delude themselves by thinking that they are converted already, when they be not

O sirs, conversion is another kind of work than most are aware of. It is not a small matter to bring an earthly mind to heaven, and to shew man the amiable excellencies of God, till he be taken up in such love to him that can never be quenched ; to break the heart for sin, and make him fly for refuge unto Christ, and thankfully embrace him as the life of his soul ; to have the very drift and bent of the heart and life to be changed ; so that a man renounceth that which he took for his felicity, and placeth his felicity where he never did before, and liveth not to the same end, and driveth not on the same design in the world as formerly he did : in a word, he that is in Christ "is a new creature ; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new," 2 Cor. v. 17. He hath a new understanding, a new will and resolution, new sorrows, and desires, and love, and delight ; new thoughts, new speeches, new company (if possible), and a new conversation. Sin, that before was a jesting matter with him, is now so odious and terrible to him that he flies from it as from death. The world, that was so lovely in his eyes, doth now appear but as vanity and vexation. God, that was before neglected, is now the only happiness of his soul : before he was forgotten, and every lust preferred before him ; but now is set next the heart, and all things must give place to him ; and the heart is taken up in the attendance and observance of him, and is grieved when he hides his face, and never thinks itself well without him. Christ himself, that was wont to be slightly thought of, is now his only hope and refuge, and he lives upon him as on his daily bread ; he cannot pray without him, nor rejoice without him, nor think, nor speak, nor live, without him. Heaven itself, that before was looked upon but as a tolerable reserve, which he hoped might serve turn better than hell, when he could not stay any longer in the world, is now taken for his home, the place of his only hope and rest, where he shall see, and love, and praise that God that hath his heart already. Hell, that did seem before but as a bugbear to frighten men from sin, doth now appear to be a real misery, that is not

to be ventured on or jested with. The works of holiness, which before he was weary of, and seemed to be more ado than needs, are now both his recreation, and his business, and the trade he lives upon. The Bible, which was before to him but almost as a common book, is now as the law of God, as a letter written to him from heaven, and subscribed with the name of the Eternal Majesty; it is the rule of his thoughts, and words, and deeds; the commands are binding, the threats are dreadful, and the promises of it speak life to his soul. The godly, that seemed to him but like other men, are now the most excellent and happiest on earth. And the wicked that were his play-fellows, are now his grief; and he that could laugh at their sins, is readier now to weep for their sin and misery, Psal. xv. 4; xvi. 3; Phil. iii. 18. In short, he hath a new end in his thoughts, and a new way in his endeavours, and therefore his heart and life are new. Before, his carnal self was his end; and his pleasure, and worldly profits, and credits were his way. And now, God and everlasting glory are his end; and Christ, and the Spirit, and the word, and ordinances, holiness to God, and righteousness and mercy to men, these are his way. Before, self was the chiefest ruler, to which the matters of God and conscience must stoop and give place: and now God in Christ, by the Spirit, word, and ministry, is the chiefest Ruler, to whom both self, and all the matters of self, must give place. So that this is not a change in one, or two, or twenty points, but in the whole soul; and the very end and bent of the conversation. A man may step out of one path into another, and yet have his face still the same way, and be still going towards the same place; but it is another matter to turn quite back again, and take his journey the clean contrary way, to a contrary place. So it is here; a man may turn from drunkenness to thriftiness, and forsake his good fellowship, and other gross, disgraceful sins, and set upon some duties of religion, and yet be going still to the same end as before, intending his carnal self above all, and giving it still the government of his soul. But when he is converted, this self is denied and

taken down, and God is set up, and his face is turned the contrary way : and he that before was addicted to himself, and lived to himself, is now by sanctification devoted to God, and liveth unto God. Before he asked himself what he should do with his time, his parts, and his estate, and for himself he used them ; but now he asketh God what he shall do with them, and useth them for him : before he would please God so far as might stand with the pleasure of his flesh and carnal self, but not to any great displeasure of them ; but now he will please God, let flesh and self be ever so much displeased. This is the great change that God will make upon all that shall be saved.

You can say that the Holy Ghost is our Sanctifier ; but do you know what sanctification is ? Why, this is it that I have now opened to you : and every man or woman in the world must have this, or be condemned to everlasting misery. They must turn or die.

Do you believe all this, sirs, or do you not ? Surely you dare not say you do not ; for it is past all doubt or denial. These are not controversies, where one learned, pious man is of one mind, and another of another ; where one party saith this, and the other saith that : papists and baptists, and every sect among us, that deserve to be called Christians, are all agreed in this that I have said ; and if you will not believe the God of truth, and that in a case where every sect and party doth believe him, you are utterly inexcusable.

But if you do believe this, how comes it to pass that you are so quiet in an unconverted state ? Do you think you are converted ? and can you find this wonderful change upon your souls ? Have you been thus born again, and made anew ? Be not these strange matters to many of you ? and such as you never felt upon yourselves ? If you cannot tell the day or week of your change, or the very sermon that converted you, yet do you find that the work is done, and such a change indeed there is ? and that you have such hearts as are before described ? Alas, the most do follow their worldly business, and little trouble their minds with

such thoughts. And if they be but restrained from scandalous sins, and can say, I am no whoremonger, nor thief, nor curser, nor swearer, nor tippler, nor extortioner; I go to the church and say my prayers; they think that this is true conversion, and they shall be saved as well as any. Alas, this is foolish cheating of yourselves; this is too much contempt of an endless glory, and too gross neglect of your immortal souls. Can you make so light of heaven and hell? Your corpse will shortly lie in the dust, and angels or devils will presently seize upon your souls; and every man or woman of you all, will shortly be among other company, and in another case than now you are: you will dwell in these houses but a little longer; you will work in your shops and fields but a little longer; you will sit in these seats, and dwell on this earth, but a little longer; you will see with those eyes, and hear with those ears, and speak with those tongues, but a little longer, till the resurrection day; and can you make shift to forget this? Oh what a place will you be shortly in of joy or torment! Oh what a sight will you shortly see in heaven or hell! Oh what thoughts will shortly fill your hearts with unspeakable delight or horror! What work will you be employed in! To praise the Lord with saints and angels, or to cry out in fire unquenchable with devils: and should all this be forgotten? And all this will be endless, and sealed up by an unchangeable decree. Eternity, eternity will be the measure of your joys or sorrows; and can this be forgotten? And all this is true, sirs, most certainly true: when you have gone up and down a little longer, and slept and awaked but a few times more, you will be dead and gone, and find all true that now I tell you; and yet can you now so much forget it? You shall then remember you heard this sermon, and that this day, in this place, you were remembered of these things, and perceive them matters a thousand times greater than either you or I could here conceive; and yet shall they be now so much forgotten?

Beloved friends, if the Lord had not awakened me to believe and lay to heart these things myself, I should have re-

mained in the dark and selfish state, and have perished for ever ; but if he have truly made me sensible of them, it will constrain me to compassionate you, as well as myself. If your eyes were so far open as to see hell, and you saw your neighbours that were unconverted, dragged thither with hideous cries ; though they were such as you accounted honest people on earth, and feared no such matter by themselves ; such a sight would make you go home and think of it, and think again, and make you warn all about you, as that damned worldling in Luke xvi. 28 would have had his brethren warned, lest they come to that place of torment. Why, faith is a kind of sight, it is the eye of the soul, the evidence of things not seen : if I believe God, it is next to seeing ; and therefore I beseech you excuse me, if I be half as earnest with you about these matters, as if I had seen them. If I must die to-morrow, and it were in my power to come again from another world, and tell you what I had seen, would you not be willing to hear me ? and would you not believe and regard what I should tell you ? If I might preach one sermon to you after I am dead, and have seen what is done in the world to come, would you not have me plainly speak the truth ? and would you not crowd to hear me ? and would you not lay it to heart ? but this must not be : God hath his appointed way of teaching you by Scripture and ministers ; and he will not humour unbelievers so far, as to send men from the dead to them, and alter his established way : if any man quarrel with the sun, God will not humour him so far, as to set up a clearer light. Friends, I beseech you regard me now, as you would do if I should come from the dead to you ; for I can give you the full assurance of the truth of what I say to you, as if I had been there and seen it with my eyes : for it is possible for one from the dead to deceive you ; but Jesus Christ can never deceive you ; the word of God delivered in Scripture, and sealed up by the miracles and holy workings of the Spirit, can never deceive you. Believe this, or believe nothing. Believe and obey this, or you are undone. Now, as ever you believe the word of God, and as as ever you care for

the salvation of your souls, let me beg of you this reasonable request, and I beseech you deny me not, that you would without any more delay, when you are gone from hence, remember what you heard, and enter into an earnest search of your hearts, and say unto yourselves, Is it so indeed? Must I turn or die? Must I be converted or condemned? It is time for me then to look about me, before it be too late. Oh why did not I look after this till now? Why did I venturously put off or slubber over so great a business? Was I awake, or in my wits? O blessed God, what a mercy is it that thou didst not cut off my life all this while, before I had any certain hope of eternal life! Well, God forbid that I should neglect this work any longer. What state is my soul in? Am I converted, or am I not? Was ever such a change or work done upon my soul? Have I been illuminated by the word and Spirit of the Lord, to see the odiousness of sin, the need of a Saviour, the love of Christ, and the excellences of God and glory? Is my heart broken, or humbled within me, for my former life? Have I thankfully entertained my Saviour and Lord, that offered himself with pardon and life to my soul? Do I hate my former sinful life, and the remnant of every sin that is in me? Do I fly from them as my deadly enemies? Do I give up myself to a life of holiness and obedience to God? Do I love it and delight in it? Can I truly say, that I am dead to the world, and carnal self; and that I live for God, and the glory which he hath promised? Hath heaven more of my estimation and resolution than earth? And is God the dearest and highest in my soul? Once, I am sure, I lived principally to the world and flesh, and God had nothing but some heartless services which the world could spare, and which were the leavings of flesh. Is my heart now turned another way? Have I a new design, and a new end, and a new train of holy affections? Have I set my hope and heart in heaven? And is it the scope, and design, and bent of my heart and life, to get well to heaven, and see the glorious face of God, and live in his everlasting love and praise? And when I sin, is it against the habitual bent and design of my heart? And

do I conquer all gross sins, and am I weary and willing to be rid of my infirmities? This is the state of a converted soul. And thus must it be with me, or I must perish. Is it thus with me indeed, or is it not? It is time to get this doubt resolved, before the dreadful Judge resolve it. I am not such a stranger to my own heart and life, but I may somewhat perceive whether I am thus converted or not: if I be not, it will do me no good to flatter my soul with false conceits and hopes. I am resolved no more to deceive myself, but to endeavour to know truly, off or on, whether I be converted, yea or no; that if I be, I may rejoice in it, and glorify my gracious Lord, and comfortably go on till I reach the crown; and if I am not, I may set myself to beg and seek after the grace that should convert me, and may turn without any more delay: for if I find in time that I am out of the way, by the help of Christ I may turn and be received; but if I stay till either my heart be forsaken of God in blindness and hardness, or till I be caught away by death, it is then too late. There is no place for repentance and conversion then; I know it must be now or never.

Sirs, this is my request to you, that you will but take your hearts to task, and thus examine them, till you see, if it may be, whether you are converted or not; and if you cannot find it out by your own endeavours, go to your ministers, if they be faithful and experienced men, and desire their assistance. The matter is great, let not bashfulness nor carelessness hinder you. They are set over you to advise you for the saving of your souls, as physicians advise you for the curing of your bodies. It undoes many thousands, that they think they are in the way to salvation, when they are not; and think that they are converted, when it is no such thing. And then when we call to them daily to turn, they go away as they came, and think that this concerns not them; for they are turned already, and hope they shall do well enough in the way that they are in, at least if they do pick the fairest path, and avoid some of the foulest steps; when alas, all this while, they live but to the world and flesh, and are strangers to God and eternal

life, and are quite out of the way to heaven. And all this is much because we cannot persuade them to a few serious thoughts of their condition, and to spend a few hours in the examining of their states: is there not many a self-conceited wretch that hears me this day, that never bestowed one hour, or a quarter of an hour, in all their lives, to examine their souls, and try whether they are truly converted or not? O merciful God, that will care for such wretches that care no more for themselves, and that will do so much to save them from hell, and help them to heaven, who will do so little for it themselves! If all that are in the way to hell, and in a state of damnation, did but know it, they durst not continue in it. The greatest hope that the devil hath, of bringing you to damnation without a rescue, is by keeping you blindfold and ignorant of your state, and making you believe that you may do well enough in the way that you are in. If you knew that you were out of the way to heaven, and were lost for ever, if you should die as you are, durst you sleep another night in the state that you are in? Durst you live another day in it? Could you heartily laugh or be merry in such a state? What! and not know but you may be snatched away to hell in an hour! Sure it would constrain you to forsake your former company and courses, and to betake yourselves to the ways of holiness, and the communion of the saints. Sure it would drive you to cry to God for a new heart, and to seek help of those that are fit to counsel you. There is none of you, sure, that cares not for being damned. Well then, I beseech you, presently make inquiry into your hearts, and give them no rest till you find out your condition, that if it be good, you may rejoice in it and go on; and if it be bad, you may presently look about you for recovery, as men that believe they must turn or die. What say you, sirs, will you resolve and promise to be at thus much labour for your souls? Will you fall upon this self-examination when you come home? Is my request unreasonable? Your consciences know it is not; resolve on it then, before you stir: knowing how much it concerneth

your souls, I beseech you for the sake of that God that doth command you, at whose bar you will shortly appear, that you will not deny me this reasonable request. For the sake of those souls that must turn or die, I beseech you deny me not; even but to make it your business to understand your own conditions, and build upon sure ground, and know off or on, whether you are converted or no, and venture not your souls on negligent security.

But perhaps you will say, What if we should find ourselves yet unconverted, what shall we do then? This question leadeth me to my second doctrine; which will do much to the answering of it, to which I shall now proceed.

Doct. II. It is the promise of God, that the wicked shall live if they will but turn, unfeignedly and thoroughly turn.

The Lord here professeth, that this is it he takes pleasure in, that the wicked turn and live. Heaven is made as sure to the converted, as hell is to the unconverted. Turn and live, is as certain a truth as turn or die. God was not bound to provide us a Saviour, nor open to us the door of hope, nor call to us to repent and turn, when once we had cast ourselves away by sin. But he hath freely done it to magnify his mercy. Sinners, there are none of you shall have cause to go home and say, I preach desperation to you. Do we use to shut up the door of mercy against you? Oh that you would not shut it up against yourselves! Do we use to tell you that God will have no mercy on you, though you turn and be sanctified? When did you ever hear a preacher say such a word? You that bark at the preachers of the gospel, for desiring to keep you out of hell, and say that they preach desperation; tell me if you can, when did you ever hear any sober man say, that there is no hope for you, though ye repent and be converted? No, it is the clean contrary that we daily proclaim from the Lord, That whosoever is born again, and by faith and repentance doth become a new creature, shall certainly be saved; and so far we are from persuading you to despair of this, that we persuade you not to make any doubt of it. It is life, and not death, that is the first part of our mes-

sage to you ; our commission is to offer salvation ; certain salvation, a speedy, glorious, everlasting salvation, to every one of you ; to the poorest beggar, as well as to the greatest lord ; to the worst of you, even to the drunkards, swearers, worldlings, thieves, yea, to the despisers and reproachers of the holy way of salvation. We are commanded by our Lord and Master to offer you a pardon for all that is past, if you will but now at last return and live ; we are commanded to beseech and entreat you to accept the offer and return ; to tell you what preparation is made by Christ, what mercy stays for you, what patience waiteth on you, what thoughts of kindness God hath towards you ; and how happy, how certainly and unspeakably happy, you may be if you will. We have indeed, also, a message of wrath and death ; yea, of a twofold wrath and death ; but neither of them is our principal message : we must tell you of the wrath that is on you already, and the death that you are born under, for the breach of the law of works : but this is only to shew you the need of mercy, and provoke you to esteem the grace of the Redeemer. And we tell you nothing but the truth, which you must know : for who will seek out for physic, that knows not that he is sick ? For telling you of your misery, is not it that makes you miserable, but driveth you to seek for mercy. It is you that have brought this death upon yourselves. We tell you also of another death, even remediless, and much greater torment which will fall on those that will not be converted. But as this is true, and must be told you ; so it is but the last and saddest part of our message : we are first to offer you mercy, if you will turn ; and it is only those that will not turn nor hear the voice of mercy, that we must foretell damnation to. Will you but cast away your transgressions, delay no longer, but come away at the call of Christ and be converted, and become new creatures, and we have not a word of damning wrath or death to speak against you. I do here in the name of the Lord of life proclaim to you all that hear me this day, to the worst of you, to the greatest, to the oldest sinner, that you may have mercy and salvation if you will but turn. There

is mercy in God, there is sufficiency in the satisfaction of Christ, the promise is free, full, and universal: you may have life if you will but turn. But then, as you love your souls, remember what turning it is the Scripture speaks of. It is not to mend the old house, but to pull down all, and build anew on Christ the rock and sure foundation. It is not to mend somewhat in a carnal course of life, but to mortify the flesh, and live after the Spirit. It is not to serve the flesh and the world in a more reformed way, without any scandalous disgraceful sins, and with a certain kind of religiousness; but it is to change your master, and your works, and end, and set your face a contrary way, and do all for the life that you never saw, and dedicate yourselves and all you have to God. This is the change that must be made, if you will live.

Yourselves are witness now, that it is salvation, and not damnation, that is the great doctrine I preach to you, and the first part of my message to you. Accept of this, and we shall go no further with you: for we would not so much as affright or trouble you with the name of damnation without necessity.

But if you will not be saved, there is no remedy, but damnation must take place; for there is no middle place between the two. You must have either life or death.

And we are not only to offer you life, but to shew you the grounds on which we do it, and call you to believe, that God doth mean indeed as he speaks; that the promise is true, and extendeth conditionally to you as well as others, and that heaven is no fancy, but a true felicity.

If you ask, where is our commission for this offer? Among a hundred texts of Scripture, I will shew it unto you in these few:

First, you see it here in my text, and the following verses: and in Ezek. xviii. as plain as can be spoken. And in 2 Cor. v. 17-21, you have the very sum of our commission ("If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by

Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.") So Mark xvi. 15, 16, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth (that is, with such a converting faith as is before expressed) and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." And Luke xxiv. 46, 47, "Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance (which includes conversion) and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations." And Acts. v. 30, 31, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." And Acts xiii. 38, 39, "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses." And lest you think this offer is restrained to the Jews, see Gal. vi. 15, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." And Luke xiv. 17, "Come, for all things are now ready;" and ver. 23, 24.

You see by this time, that we are commanded to offer life to you all, and to tell you from God, that if you will turn you may live.

Here you may safely trust your souls; for the love of God is the fountain of this offer, John iii. 16. And the blood of the Son of God hath purchased it; the faithfulness and truth of God is engaged to make the promise good; miracles have sealed up the truth of it; preach-

ers are sent through the world to proclaim it; the sacraments are instituted and used for the solemn sealing of the mercy offered, to them that will accept it; and the Spirit doth open the heart to entertain it, and is itself the earnest of the full possession. So that the truth of it is past controversy, that the worst of you all, and every one of you, if you will but be converted, may be saved.

Indeed, if you will needs believe that you shall be saved without conversion, then you believe a falsehood; and if I should preach that to you, I should preach a lie. This were not to believe God, but the devil and your own deceitful hearts. God hath his promise of life, and the devil hath his promise of life. God's promise is, Return and live; the devil's is, Thou shalt live whether thou turn or not. The words of God are, as I have shewed you, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xviii. 3. "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," John iii. 3, 5. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14. The devil's word is, You may be saved without being born again and converted; you may go to heaven well enough without being holy; God doth but frighten you; he is more merciful than to do as he saith; he will be better to you than his word. And, alas! the greatest part of the world believe this word of the devil before the word of God, just as our first sin and misery came into the world. God saith to our first parents, If ye eat ye shall die; the devil contradicts him, and saith, Ye shall not die; and the woman believed the devil before God. So now the Lord saith, Turn or die; and the devil saith, You shall not die if you do but cry mercy at last, and give over the acts of sin, when you can practise them no longer. And this is the word that the world believes. O heinous wickedness, to believe the devil before God!

And yet that is not the worst, but blasphemously they call this a believing and trusting in God, when they put him in the shape of Satan, who was a liar from the begin-

ning; and when they believe that the word of God is a lie, they call this a trusting God, and say they believe in him, and trust on him for salvation. Where did ever God say, that the unregenerate, unconverted, unsanctified, shall be saved? Shew such a word in Scripture, I challenge you, if you can. Why, this is the devil's word, and to believe it is to believe the devil, and is the sin that is commonly called presumption. And do you call this a believing and trusting God? There is enough in the word of God to comfort and strengthen the hearts of the sanctified; but not a word to strengthen the hands of wickedness, nor to give men the least hope of being saved, though they be never sanctified.

But if you will turn, and come into the way of mercy, the mercy of the Lord is ready to entertain you. Then trust God for salvation boldly and confidently, for he is engaged by his word to save you.

He will be a father to none but his children, and he will save none but those that forsake the world, the devil, and the flesh, and come into his family, to be members of his Son, and have communion with the saints. But if they will not come in, it is their own fault; his doors are open; he keeps none back; he never sent such a message as this to any of you, It is now too late, I will not receive thee, though thou be converted. He might have done so, and done you no wrong, but he did not, he doth not to this day, he is still ready to receive you, if you were but ready unfeignedly, and with all your hearts, to turn. And the fullness of this truth will yet more appear in the two following doctrines, which I shall, therefore, next proceed to, before I make a further application of this.

Doct. III. God taketh pleasure in men's conversion and salvation, but not in their death and damnation. He had rather they would return and live, than go on and die.

I shall first teach you how to understand this; and then clear up the truth of it to you.

And for the first, you must observe these following things: 1. A simple willingness and complacency is the first

act of the will, following the simple apprehension of the understanding, before it proceedeth to compare things together. But the choosing act of the will is a following act, and supposeth the comparing practical act of the understanding; and these two acts may often be carried to contrary objects, without any fault at all in the person.

2. An unfeigned willingness may have divers degrees. Some things I am so far willing of, as that I will do all that lieth in my power to accomplish them. And some things I am truly willing another should do, when yet I will not do all that ever I am able to procure them, having many reasons to dissuade me therefrom; though yet I will do all that belongs to me to do.

3. The will of a ruler, as such, is manifest in making and executing laws; but the will of a man in his simple natural capacity, or as absolute lord of his own, is manifested in desiring or resolving of events.

4. A ruler's will, as lawgiver, is, first and principally, that his law be obeyed, and not at all that the penalty be executed on any, but only on supposition that they will not obey his laws. But a ruler's will, as judge, supposeth the law already either kept or broken. And, therefore, he resolveth on reward or punishment accordingly.

Having given you these necessary distinctions, I shall next apply them to the case in hand, in these following propositions:—

1. It is in the glass of the word and creatures that in this life we must know God. And so, according to the nature of man, we ascribe to him understanding and will, removing all the imperfections that we can, because we are capable of no higher positive conceptions of him.

2. And on the same grounds we do (with the Scriptures) distinguish between the acts of God's will, as diversified from the respects, or the objects, though as to God's essence they are all one.

3. And the bolder, because that when we speak of Christ, we have the more ground for it from his human nature.

4. And thus we say, that the simple complacency, will, or love of God, is to all that is naturally or morally good, according to the nature and degree of its goodness. And so he hath pleasure in the conversion and salvation of all, which yet will never come to pass.

5. And God, as Ruler and Lawgiver of the world, had so far a practical will for their salvation, as to make them a free offer of gift of Christ and life, and an act of oblivion for all their sins, so be it they will not unthankfully reject it ; and to command his messengers to offer this gift to all the world, and persuade them to accept it. And so he doth all that, as Lawgiver or Promiser, belongs to him to do for their salvation.

6. But yet he resolveth, as Lawgiver, that they that will not turn, shall die. And as Judge, when their day of grace is past, he will execute that decree.

7. So that he thus unfeignedly willeth the conversion of those that never will be converted, but not as absolute Lord, with the fullest efficacious resolution, nor as a thing which he resolveth shall undoubtedly come to pass, or would engage all his power to accomplish. It is in the power of a prince to set a guard upon a murderer, to see that he shall not murder and be hanged. But if upon good reason he forbear this, and do but send to his subjects, and warn and entreat them not to be murderers, I hope he may well say, that he would not have them murder and be hanged ; he takes no pleasure in it, but rather that they forbear, and live. And if he do more for some, upon some special reason, he is not bound to do so by all. The king may well say to all the murderers and felons in the land, I have no pleasure in your death, but rather that you would obey my laws and live ; but if you will not, I am resolved, for all this, that you shall die. The judge may truly say to the thief, or a murderer, Alas ! man, I have no delight in thy death, I had rather thou hadst kept the law, and saved thy life ; but seeing thou hast not, I must condemn thee, or else I should be unjust. So, though God have no pleasure in your damnation, and therefore calls upon you to return and

live, yet he hath pleasure in the demonstration of his own justice, and the executing his laws ; and, therefore, he is for all this fully resolved, that if you will not be converted, you shall be condemned. If God were so much against the death of the wicked, as that he were resolved to do all that he can to hinder it, then no man should be condemned, whereas Christ telleth you that few will be saved. But so far God is against your damnation, as that he will teach you and warn you, and set before you life and death, and offer you your choice, and command his ministers to entreat you not to damn yourselves, but accept this mercy, and so to leave you without excuse ; but if this will not do, and if still you be unconverted, he professeth to you he is resolved of your damnation, and hath commanded us to say to you in his name, ver. 18, " O wicked man, thou shalt surely die ! " And Christ hath little less than sworn it over and over, with a " Verily, verily, except ye be converted and born again, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xviii. 3 ; John iii. 3. Mark that he saith, " You cannot." It is in vain to hope for it, and in vain to dream that God is willing of it ; for it is a thing that cannot be.

In a word, you see then the meaning of the text, that God, the great Lawgiver of the world, doth take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn and live ; though yet he be resolved that none shall live but those that turn ; and as a judge even delighteth in justice, and manifesteth his hatred of sin, though not in their misery which they have brought upon themselves, in itself considered.

2. And for the proofs of this point, I shall be very brief in them, because I suppose you easily believe it already.

1. The very gracious nature of God proclaimed, Exod. xxxiv. 6 ; xx. 6, and frequently elsewhere, may assure you of this, that he hath no pleasure in your death.

2. If God had more pleasure in thy death than in thy conversion and life, he would not have so frequently commanded thee in his word to turn ; he would not have made thee such promises of life, if thou wilt but turn ; he would

not have persuaded thee to it by so many reasons. The tenor of his gospel proveth the point.

3. And his commission that he hath given to the ministers of the gospel doth fully prove it. If God had taken more pleasure in thy damnation than in thy conversion and salvation, he would never have charged us to offer you mercy, and to teach you the way of life, both publicly and privately; and to entreat and beseech you to turn and live; to acquaint you of your sins, and foretell you of your danger; and to do all that possibly we can for your conversion, and to continue patiently so doing, though you should hate or abuse us for our pains. Would God have done this and appointed his ordinances for your good, if he had taken pleasure in your death?

4. It is proved also by the course of his providence. If God had rather you were damned than converted and saved, he would not second his word with his works, and entice you by his daily kindness to himself, and give you all the mercies of this life, which are his means to lead you to repentance, Rom. ii. 4, and bring you so often under his rod, to force you to your wits. He would not set so many examples before your eyes; no, nor wait on you so patiently as he doth from day to day, and year to year. These be not signs of one that taketh pleasure in your death; if this had been his delight, how easily could he have had thee long ago in hell! How oft, before this, could he have caught thee away in the midst of thy sins, with a curse, or oath, or lie in thy mouth, in thy ignorance, and pride, and sensuality; when thou wert lost in thy drunkenness, or last deriding the ways of God! How easily could he have stopped thy breath, and tamed thee with his plagues, and made thee sober in another world! Alas! how small a matter is it for the Almighty to rule the tongue of the profanest railer, and tie the hands of the most malicious persecutor; or calm the fury of the bitterest of his enemies, and make them know they are but worms! If he should but frown upon thee, thou wouldst drop into thy grave. If he gave commission to one of his angels to go and destroy ten

thousand sinners, how quickly would it be done! How easily can he lay thee upon the bed of languishing, and make thee lie roaring there in pain, and make thee eat the words of reproach which thou hast spoken against his servants, his word, his worship, and his holy ways; and make thee send to beg their prayers, whom thou didst despise in thy presumption! How easily can he lay that flesh under gripes and groans, and make it too weak to hold thy soul, and make it more loathsome than the dung of the earth! That flesh which now must have what it loves, and must not be displeased, and must be humoured with meat, drink, and clothes, whatsoever God says to the contrary, how quickly would the frowns of God consume it! When thou wast passionately defending thy sin, and quarrelling with them that would have drawn thee from it, and shewing thy spleen against the reprovers, and pleading for the works of darkness; how easily could God snatch thee away in a moment, and set thee before his dreadful Majesty, where thou mayest see ten thousand times ten thousand of glorious angels waiting on his throne, and call thee there to plead thy cause, and ask thee, What hast thou now to say against thy Creator, his truth, his servants, or his holy ways? now plead thy cause, and make the best of it thou canst. Now what canst thou say in excuse of thy sins? Now give account of thy worldliness and fleshly life, of thy time, of all thy mercies thou hast had. Oh how thy stubborn heart would have melted, and thy proud looks be taken down, and thy countenance appalled, and thy stout words turned into speechless silence, or dreadful cries; if God had but set thee thus at his bar, and pleaded his own cause with thee, which thou hast here so maliciously pleaded against! How easily can he, at any time, say to thy guilty soul, Come away, and live in that flesh no longer, till the resurrection, and it cannot resist! A word of his mouth would take off the noise of thy present life, and then all thy parts and powers would stand still; and if he say unto thee, Live no longer, or, Live in hell, thou couldst not disobey.

But God hath yet done none of this; but hath patiently

forborne thee, and mercifully upheld thee, and given thee that breath which thou didst breathe out against him, and given those mercies which thou didst sacrifice to the flesh, and afforded thee that provision which thou spentest to satisfy thy greedy throat: he gave thee every minute of that time which thou didst waste in idleness, and drunkenness, or worldliness. And doth not all his patience and mercy shew that he desired not thy damnation? Can the lamp burn without the oil? Can your houses stand without the earth to bear them? As well as you can live one hour without the support of God. And why did he so long support thy life, but to see when thou wouldst bethink thee of the folly of thy ways, and return and live? Will any man purposely put arms into his enemy's hands to resist him? Or hold a candle to a murderer that is killing his children? or to an idle servant that plays and sleeps the while? Surely it is to see whether thou wilt at last return and live, that God has so long waited on thee.

5. It is further proved by the sufferings of his Son that God taketh no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Would he have ransomed them from death at so dear a rate? Would he have astonished angels and men by his condescension? Would God have dwelt in flesh, and have come in the form of a servant, and have assumed humanity into one person with the Godhead? And would Christ have lived a life of suffering, and died a cursed death for sinners, if he had rather taken pleasure in their death? Suppose you saw him but so busy in preaching and healing of them, as you find him in Mark iii. 21; or so long in fasting, as in Matt. iv.; or all night in prayer, as in Luke vi. 12; or praying with drops of blood trickling from him instead of sweat, as Luke xxii. 44; or suffering a cursed death upon the cross, and pouring out his soul as a sacrifice for our sins; would you have thought these the signs of one that delighteth in the death of the wicked?

And think not to extenuate it by saying, that it was only for his elect. For it was thy sin, and the sin of all the world, that lay upon our Redeemer; and his sacrifice and

satisfaction is sufficient for all, and the fruits of it are offered to one as well as another ; but it is true that it was never the intent of his mind, to pardon and save any that would not by faith and repentance be converted. If you had seen and heard him weeping and bemoaning the state of disobedience in impenitent people, Luke xix. 41, 42, or complaining of their stubbornness, as Matt. xxiii. 37, " O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ! " Or if you had seen and heard him on the cross, praying for his persecutors, " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do ; " would you have suspected that he had delighted in the death of the wicked, even of those that perish by their wilful unbelief? When " God hath so loved " (not only loved, but so loved " the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him " (by an effectual faith) " should not perish, but have everlasting life," I think he hath hereby proved, against the malice of men and devils, that he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but had rather that they would turn and live.

6. Lastly, If all this will not yet satisfy you, take his own word, that knoweth best his own mind ; or at least believe his oath. But this leadeth me up to the fourth doctrine.

Doct. IV. The Lord hath confirmed it to us by his oath, that he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he turn and live ; that he may leave man no pretence to question the truth of it.

If you dare question his word, I hope you dare not question his oath. As Christ hath solemnly protested, that the unregenerate and unconverted cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, in Matt. xviii. 3 ; John iii. 3 ; so God hath sworn, that his pleasure is not in their death, but in their conversion and life. And as the apostle saith, Heb. vi. 13, 16-18, " Because he can swear by no greater than himself, he saith, As I live, &c. For men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the

heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath : that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us ; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast." If there be any man that cannot reconcile this truth with the doctrine of predestination, or the actual damnation of the wicked, that is his own ignorance ; he hath no pretence left to deny or question therefore the truth of the point in hand ; for this is confirmed by the oath of God, and therefore must not be distorted, to reduce it to other points ; but doubtful points must rather be reduced to it, and certain truths must be believed to agree with it, though our shallow brains do hardly discern the agreement.

Use. I do entreat thee, if thou be an unconverted sinner that hearest these words, that thou wouldst ponder a little upon the forementioned doctrines, and bethink thyself awhile, who it is that takes pleasure in thy sin and damnation. Certainly it is not God. He hath sworn for his part, that he takes no pleasure in it. And I know it is not the pleasing of him that you intend in it. You dare not say that you drink and swear, and neglect holy duties, and quench the motions of the Spirit, to please God. That were as if you should reproach the prince, and break his laws, and seek his death, and say, you did all this to please him.

Who is it then that takes pleasure in your sin and death ? Not any that bear the image of God, for they must be like-minded to him. God knows, it is small pleasure to your faithful teachers, to see you serve your deadly enemy, and madly venture your eternal state, and wilfully run into the flames of hell. It is small pleasure to them, to see upon your souls (in the sad effects) such blindness, and hard-heartedness, and carelessness, and presumption ; such wilfulness in evil, and such uncharitableness, and stiffness against the ways of life and peace : they know these are marks of death, and of the wrath of God, and they know, from the word of God, what is like to be the end of them ; and there-

fore it is no more pleasure to them, than to a tender physician to see the plague-marks break out upon his patient. Alas ! to foresee your everlasting torments, and know not how to prevent them ! To see how near you are to hell, and we cannot make you believe it, and consider it ! To see how easily, how certainly you might escape, if we knew but how to make you willing ! How fair you are for everlasting salvation, if you would but turn and do your best, and make it the care and business of your lives ! But you will not do it ; if our lives lay on it, we cannot persuade you to do it. We study day and night what to say to you, that may convince you, and persuade you, and yet it is undone : we lay before you the word of God, and shew you the very chapter and verse where it is written, that you cannot be saved except you be converted ; and yet we leave the most of you as we find you : we hope you will believe the word of God, though you believe not us, and that you will regard it when we shew you plain Scripture for it ; but we hope in vain, and labour in vain, as to any saving change upon your hearts. And do you think that this is a pleasant thing to us ? Many a time in secret prayers we are fain to complain to God with sad hearts, Alas, Lord, we have spoken it to them, in thy name, but they little regard us ; we have told them what thou bidst us tell them, concerning the danger of an unconverted state, but they do not believe us ; we have told them that thou hast protested, " That there is no peace to the wicked," Isa. xlviii. 22 ; lvii. 21 ; but the worst of them all will scarcely believe that they are wicked : we have shewed them the word, where thou hast said, " That if they live after the flesh they shall die," Rom. viii. 13 ; but they say, they will believe in thee, when they will not believe thee ; and that they will trust in thee, when they give no credit to thy word ; and when they hope that the threatenings of thy word are false, they will yet call this a hoping in God ; and though we shew them where thou hast said, " That when a wicked man dieth, all his hopes perish," Prov. xi. 7, yet cannot we persuade them from their deceitful hopes. We tell them what a base, unprofitable thing sin is, but they love it,

and therefore will not leave it. We tell them how dear they buy their pleasure, and what they must pay for it in everlasting torment, and they bless themselves and will not believe it, but will do as the most do ; and because God is merciful, they will not believe him, but will venture their souls, come on it what will. We tell them how ready the Lord is to receive them ; and this does but make them delay their repentance, and be bolder in their sin. Some of them say, they purpose to repent, but they are still the same ; and some say, they do repent already, while yet they are not converted from their sins. We exhort them, we entreat them, we offer them our help, but we cannot prevail with them, but they that were drunkards are drunkards still ; and they that were voluptuous, flesh-pleasing wretches, are such still ; and they that were worldlings are worldlings still ; and they that were ignorant, proud, and self-conceited, are so still. Few of them will see and confess their sin, and fewer will forsake it, but comfort themselves that all men are sinners ; as if there were no difference between a converted sinner and an unconverted. Some of them will not come near us when we are willing to instruct them, but think they know enough already, and need not our instruction ; and some of them will give us the hearing, and do what they list ; and most of them are like dead men that cannot feel ; so that when we tell them of the matters of everlasting consequence, we cannot get a word of it to their hearts. If we do not obey them, and humour them in baptizing children of the most obstinately wicked, and giving them the Lord's supper, and doing all that they would have us, though never so much against the word of God, they will hate us, and rail at us ; but if we beseech them to confess and forsake their sins, and save their souls, they will not do it. We tell them, if they will but turn, we will deny them none of the ordinances of God, neither baptism to their children, nor the Lord's supper to themselves ; but they will not hear us : they would have us to disobey God, damn our souls to please them, and yet they will not turn, and save their own souls to please God. They are wiser in their own eyes than all their

teachers; they rage, and are confident in their own way; and if we would never so fain, we cannot change them. Lord, this is the case of our miserable neighbours, and we cannot help it; we see them ready to drop into hell, and we cannot help it: we know if they would unfeignedly turn, they might be saved; but we cannot persuade them: if we would beg it of them on our knees, we cannot persuade them to it; if we would beg it of them with tears, we cannot persuade them: and what more can we do?

These are the secret complaints and moans that many a poor minister is fain to make; and do you think that he hath any pleasure in this? Is it a pleasure to him to see you go on in sin and cannot stop you? to see you so miserable, and cannot so much as make you sensible of it? to see you merry, when you are not sure to be an hour out of hell? to think what you must for ever suffer because you will not turn? and to think what an everlasting life of glory you wilfully despise and cast away? What sadder things can you bring to their hearts, and how can you devise to grieve them more?

Who is it then that you pleasure by your sin and death? It is none of your understanding, godly friends. Alas, it is the grief of their souls to see your misery, and they lament you many a time, when you give them little thanks for it, and when you have not hearts to lament yourselves.

Who is it then that takes pleasure in your sin? It is none but the three great enemies of God, whom you renounced in your baptism, and now are turned falsely to serve.

1. The devil, indeed, takes pleasure in your sin and death; for this is the very end of all his temptations: for this he watches night and day: you cannot devise to please him better, than to go on in sin. How glad is he when he sees thee going to the alehouse, or other sin; and when he heareth thee curse, or swear, or rail! How glad is he when he heareth thee revile the minister that would draw thee from thy sin, and help to save thee! These are his delight.

2. The wicked are also delighted in it, for it is agreeable to their nature.

3. But I know, for all this, that it is not the pleasing of the devil that you intend, even when you please him; but it is your own flesh, the greatest and most dangerous enemy, that you intend to please. It is the flesh that would be pampered, that would be pleased in meat, and drink, and clothing, that would be pleased in your company, and pleased in applause and credit with the world, and pleased in sports, and lusts, and idleness; this is the gulf that devoureth all. This is the very god that you serve; for the Scripture saith of such, "that their bellies are their god," Phil. iii. 18.

But I beseech you stay a little and consider the business.

1. *Quest.* Should your flesh be pleased before your Maker? Will you displease the Lord, and displease your teacher, and your godly friends, and all to please your brutish appetites, or sensual desires? Is not God worthy to be a ruler of your flesh? if he shall not rule it, he will not save it; you cannot in reason expect that he should.

2. *Quest.* Your flesh is pleased with your sin; but is your conscience pleased? Doth not it grudge within you, and tell you sometimes that all is not well, and that your case is not so safe as you make it to be? And should not your souls and consciences be pleased before that corruptible flesh?

3. *Quest.* But is not your flesh preparing for its own displeasure also? It loves the bait, but doth it love the hook? It loves the strong drink and sweet morsels; it loves its ease, and sport, and merriment; it loves to be rich, and well spoken of by men, and to be somebody in the world; but doth it love the curse of God? Doth it love to stand trembling before his bar, and to be judged to everlasting fire? Doth it love to be tormented with the devils for ever? Take all together; for there is no separating sin and hell, but only by faith and true conversion; if you will keep one, you must have the other. If death and hell be pleasant to thee, no wonder then if thou go on in sin; but

if they be not (as I am sure they be not), then what if sin be never so pleasant, is it worth the loss of life eternal? Is a little drink, meat, ease, the good word of sinners, or the riches of this world, to be valued above the joys of heaven? or are they worth the sufferings of eternal fire? Sirs, these questions should be considered, before you go any farther, by every man that hath reason to consider, and that believes he hath a soul to save or lose.

Well, the Lord here sweareth that he hath no pleasure in your death, but rather that you would turn and live: if yet you will go on and die, rather than turn, remember it was not to please God that you did it, it was to please the world, and to please yourselves. And if men will damn themselves to please themselves, and run into endless torments for delight, and have not the wit, the heart, the grace to hearken to God or man that would reclaim them, what remedy? But they must take what they get by it, and repent in another manner, when it is too late. Before I proceed any farther in the application, I shall come to the next doctrine; which giveth a fuller ground for it.

Doct. V. So earnest is God for the conversion of sinners, that he doubleth his commands and exhortations with vehemency; "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?"

This doctrine is the application of the former, as by a use of exhortation, and accordingly I shall handle it. Is there ever an unconverted sinner, that heareth these vehement words of God? Is there ever a man or woman in this assembly, that is yet a stranger to the renewing, sanctifying works of the Holy Ghost? (It is a happy assembly if it be not so with the most). Hearken then to the voice of your Maker, and turn to him by Christ without delay. Would you know the will of God? Why this is his will, that you presently turn. Shall the living God send so earnest a message to his creatures, and should they not obey? Hearken then, all you that live after the flesh; the Lord that gave thee thy breath and being, hath sent a message to thee from heaven, and this is his message, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Shall the voice of the Eternal Majesty be neglected? If he do but terribly thunder, thou art afraid; O but this voice doth more nearly concern thee: if he do but tell thee thou shalt die to-morrow, thou wouldst not make light of it; O but this word concerneth thy life or death everlasting! It is both a command and an exhortation: as if he said to thee, I charge thee upon the allegiance thou owest to me thy Creator and Redeemer, that thou renounce the flesh, the world, and the devil, and turn to me that thou mayest live. I condescend to entreat thee, as thou lovest or fearest him that made thee, as thou lovest thine own life, even thine everlasting life, turn and live; as ever thou wouldst escape eternal misery, turn, turn, "for why wilt thou die?" And is there a heart in man, in a reasonable creature, that can once refuse such a message, such a command, such an exhortation as this? Oh what a thing then is the heart of man!

Hearken then, all that love yourselves, and all that regard your own salvation. Here is the most joyful message that ever was sent to the ears of man, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" You are not yet shut up under desperation. Here is mercy offered you; turn and you shall have it. O sirs, with what glad and joyful hearts should you receive these tidings! I know that this is not the first time that you have heard it: but how have you regarded it, or how do you regard it now? Hear, all you ignorant, careless sinners, the word of the Lord! Hear, all you worldlings, you sensual flesh-pleasers, you gluttons and drunkards, and whoremongers and swearers, you railers and backbiters, slanderers and liars; "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?"

Hear, all you cold and outside professors, and all that are strangers to the life of Christ, and never knew the power of his cross and resurrection, and never felt your hearts warmed with his love, and live not on him as the strength of your souls; "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?"

Hear, all that are void of the love of God, whose hearts are not towards him, nor taken up with the hopes of glory,

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but set more by your earthly prosperity and delights, than by the joys of heaven ; you that are religious but a little on the bye, and give God no more than your flesh can spare ; that have not denied your carnal selves, and forsaken all that you have for Christ, in the estimation and grounded resolution of your souls ; but have some one thing in the world so dear to you, that you cannot spare it for Christ, if he requires it, but will rather even venture on his displeasure, than forsake it ; “ Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die ? ”

If you never heard it or observed it before, remember that ye were told it from the word of God this day, that if you will but turn, you may live ; and if you will not turn, you shall surely die.

What now will you do, sirs ? What is your resolution ? Will you turn, or will you not ? Halt not any longer between two opinions : if the Lord be God, follow him ; if your flesh be God, then serve it still. If heaven be better than earth and fleshly pleasures, come away then and seek a better country, and lay up your treasure where rust and moths do not corrupt, and thieves cannot break through and steal, and be awakened at last with all your might to seek the kingdom that cannot be moved, Heb. xii. 28 ; and to employ your lives on a higher design, and turn the stream of your cares and labours another way than formerly you have done : but if earth be better than heaven, or will do more for you, or last you longer, then keep it and make your best of it, and follow it still. Sirs, are you resolved what to do ? If you be not, I will set a few more moving considerations before you, to see if reason will make you resolve.

Consider, first, what preparations mercy hath made for your salvation ; and what pity it is that any man should be damned after all this. The time was, when the flaming sword was in the way, and the curse of God's law would have kept thee back, if thou hadst been never so willing to turn to God : the time was, when thyself, and all the friends that thou hadst in the world, could never have procured thee the pardon of thy sins past, though thou hadst never

so much lamented, and reformed them. But Christ hath removed this impediment by the ransom of his blood. The time was, that God was wholly unreconciled, as being not satisfied for the violation of his law; but now he is so far satisfied and reconciled, as that he hath made thee a free act of oblivion, and a free deed of the gift of Christ and life, and offereth it to thee, and entreateth thee to accept it, and it may be thine if thou wilt. For, "He was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and hath committed to us the word of actual reconciliation," 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. Sinners, we are commanded to do this message to you all, as from the Lord. "Come, for all things are ready," Luke xiv. 17. Are all things ready, and are you unready? God is ready to entertain you and pardon all that you have done against him, if you will but come. As long as you have sinned, as wilfully as you have sinned, as heinously as you have sinned, he is ready to cast all behind his back, if you will but come. Though you have been prodigals, and run away from God, and have staid so long, he is ready even to meet you, and embrace you in his arms, and rejoice in your conversion, if you will but turn. Even the earthly worldling and swinish drunkard may find God ready to bid him welcome, if they will but come. Doth not this turn thy heart within thee? O sinner, if thou hast a heart of flesh, and not of stone in thee, methinks this should melt it. Shall the dreadful infinite Majesty of heaven, even wait for thy returning, and be ready to receive thee who hast abused him, and forgotten him so long? shall he delight in thy conversion, that might at any time glorify his justice in thy damnation? and doth it not yet melt thy heart within thee, and art thou not yet ready to come in? Hast thou not as much reason to be ready to come, as God hath to invite thee and bid thee welcome?

But that is not all; Christ hath done his part on the cross, and made such a way for thee to the Father, that on his account thou mayest be welcome, if thou wilt come; and yet art thou not ready?

A pardon is already expressly granted, and offered thee in the gospel ; and yet art thou not ready ?

The ministers of the gospel are ready to assist thee, to instruct thee, and pronounce the absolving words of peace to thy soul ; they are ready to pray for thee, and to seal up thy pardon by the administration of the holy sacrament ; and yet art thou not ready ?

All that fear God about thee, are ready to rejoice in thy conversion, and to receive thee into the communion of saints, and to give thee the right hand of fellowship, yea, though thou hadst been one that had been cast out of their society : they dare not but forgive where God forgiveth, when it is manifest to them by thy confession and amendment ; they dare not so much as hit thee in the teeth with thy former sins, because they know that God will not upbraid thee with them. If thou hadst been never so scandalous, if thou wouldst but heartily be converted and come in, they would not refuse thee, let the world say what they would against it. And are all these ready to receive thee, and yet art thou not ready to come in ?

Yea, heaven itself is ready ; the Lord will receive thee into the glory of the saints, as vile a beast as thou hast been, if thou wilt but be cleansed thou mayst have a place before his throne ; his angels will be ready to guard thy soul to the place of joy, if thou do but unfeignedly come in. And is God ready, the sacrifice of Christ ready, the promise ready, and pardon ready ; are ministers ready, the people of God ready, and heaven itself ready, and angels ready, and all these but waiting for thy conversion, and yet art thou not ready ? What ! not ready to live, when thou hast been dead so long ? not ready to come to thy right understanding (as the prodigal is said to come to himself, Luke xv. 17), when thou hast been beside thyself so long ? not ready to be saved, when thou art even ready to be condemned ? Art thou not ready to lay hold on Christ that would deliver thee, when thou art even ready to drown, and sink into damnation ? Art thou not ready to be saved from hell, when thou art even ready to be cast remediless

into it; alas! man, dost thou know what thou dost? If thou die unconverted, there is no doubt to be made of thy damnation: and thou art not sure to live an hour; and yet art thou not ready to turn, and to come in? O miserable wretch! hast thou not served the flesh and the devil long enough? Yet hast thou not enough of sin? Is it so good to thee, or so profitable for thee? Dost thou know what it is, that thou wouldst yet have more of it? Hast thou had so many calls, and so many mercies, and so many blows, and so many examples, hast thou seen so many laid in the grave, and yet art thou not ready to let go thy sins, and come to Christ? What! after so many convictions, and gripes of conscience, after so many purposes and promises, art thou not yet ready to turn and live? Oh that thy eyes, thy heart were opened, to know how fair an offer is now made to thee! and what a joyful message it is that we are sent on, to bid thee come, for all things are ready!

2. Consider, also, what calls thou hast to turn and live; how many, how loud, how earnest, how dreadful, and yet what encouraging, joyful calls.

For the principal Inviter, it is God himself. He that commandeth heaven and earth, commandeth thee to turn; and presently, without delay, to turn. He commandeth the sun to run its course, and to rise upon thee every morning; and though it be so glorious a creature, and many times bigger than all the earth, yet it obeyeth him, and faileth not one minute of its appointed time. He commandeth all the planets and orbs of heaven, and they obey. He commandeth the sea to ebb and flow, and the whole creation to keep its course, and all they obey him. The angels of heaven obey his will, when he sends them to minister to such silly worms as we on earth, Heb. i. 14. And yet if he command but a sinner to turn, he will not obey him: he only thinks himself wiser than God, and he cavils and heads the cause of sin, and will not obey. If the Lord Almighty says the word, the heavens and all therein obey him; but if he call a drunkard out of an ale-house he will not obey; or if he call a worldly, fleshly sinner to deny

himself, and mortify the flesh, and set his heart on a better inheritance; he will not obey.

If thou hadst any love in thee, thou wouldst know the voice, and say, O this is my Father's call! How can I find in my heart to disobey? For the sheep of Christ do "know and hear his voice; and they follow him, and he giveth them eternal life," John xii. 4. If thou hast any spiritual life and sense in thee, at least thou wouldst say, This call is the dreadful voice of God, and who dare disobey? For saith the prophet, "The lion hath roared, who will not fear?" Amos iii. 8. God is not a man that thou shouldst dally and play with him. Remember what he said to Paul at his conversion, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," Acts ix. 5. Wilt thou yet go on and despise his word, and resist his Spirit, and stop thine ears against his call? Who is it that will have the worst of this? Dost thou know whom thou disobeyest and contendest with, and what thou art doing? It were a far wiser and easier task for thee to contend with the thorns, and spurn them with thy bare feet, and beat them with thy bare hands, or put thy head into the burning fire. "Be not deceived, God will not be mocked," Gal. vi. 7. Whosoever else may be mocked, God will not; you had better play with the fire in your thatch, than with the fire of his burning wrath in your soul. "For our God is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 29. Oh how unmeet a match art thou for God! "It is a fearful thing to fall into his hands," Heb. x. 31; and therefore it is a fearful thing to contend with him, or resist him. As you love your own souls, take heed what you do. What will you say if he begin in wrath to plead with you? What will you do if he take you once in hand? Will you then strive against his judgment, as now you do against his grace? Saith the Lord, "Fury is not in me;" that is, I delight not to destroy, I do it as it were unwillingly: but yet, "Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me,"

Isa. xxvii. 4, 6. It is an unequal combat for the briers and stubble to make war with the fire.

And thus you see who it is that calleth you, that should move you to hear this call, and turn: so consider also, by what instruments, and how often, and how earnestly he doth it.

1. Every leaf of the blessed book of God hath, as it were, a voice, and calls out unto thee, "Turn and live, turn or thou wilt die." How canst thou open it, and read a leaf, or hear a chapter, and not perceive God bids thee turn?

2. It is the voice of every sermon thou hearest; for what else is the scope and drift of all, but to call, and persuade, and entreat thee to turn?

3. It is the voice of many a motion of the Spirit, that secretly speaks over these words again, and urgeth thee to turn.

4. It is likely sometimes it is the voice of thy own conscience. Art thou not sometimes convinced, that all is not well with thee; and doth not thy conscience tell thee, that thou must be a new man, and take a new course, and often call upon thee to return?

5. It is the voice of the gracious examples of the godly. When thou seest them live a heavenly life, and fly from the sin which is thy delight, this really calls upon thee to turn.

6. It is the voice of all the works of God. For they also are God's books that teach thee this lesson, by shewing thee his greatness, and wisdom, and goodness, and calling thee to observe them, and admire the Creator. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work; day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge," Psal. xix. 1, 2. Every time the sun riseth upon thee, it really calleth thee to turn; as if it should say, What do I travel and compass the world for, but to declare to men the glory of their Maker, and to light them to do his work? And do I still find thee doing the work of sin, and sleeping out thy life in negligence? "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light," Eph. v. 14. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand. It is now high time to awake out of sleep."

Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof," Rom. xiii. 11-14. (This text was the means of Augustine's conversion. I pray God it may be yours.)

7. It is the voice of every mercy thou dost possess. If thou couldst but hear and understand them, they all cry out unto thee, Turn. Why doth the earth bear thee, but to seek and serve the Lord? Why doth it afford thee fruit, but to serve him? Why doth the air afford thee breath, but to serve him? Why do all the creatures serve thee with their labours, and their lives, but that thou mightest serve the Lord of them and thee? Why doth he give thee time, and health, and strength, but to serve him? Why hast thou meat, drink, and clothes, but for his service? Hast thou any thing which thou hast not received? And if thou didst receive them, it is reason thou shouldst bethink thee from whom, and to what end and use, thou didst receive them. Didst thou never cry to him for help in thy distress? And didst thou not then understand that it was thy part to turn and serve him if he would deliver thee? He hath done his part, and spared thee yet longer, and tried thee another and another year, and yet thou dost not turn. You know the parable of the unfruitful fig-tree, Luke xiii. 6-9. When the Lord had said, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" he was entreated to try it one year longer, and then, if it proved not fruitful, to cut it down. Christ himself there makes the application twice over, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," ver. 3, 5. How many years hath God looked for the fruits of love and holiness from thee, and hath found none? and yet hath spared thee. How many times, by thy wilful ignorance, carelessness, and disobedience, hast thou provoked justice to say, "Cut him down, why cumbereth he the ground?" and yet mercy hath prevailed, and patience hath forborne the killing, damning blow to this day. If thou

hadst the understanding of a man within thee, thou wouldst know that all this calleth thee to turn. "Dost thou think thou shalt still escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every one according to his deeds," Rom. ii. 3-6.

8. Moreover, it is the voice of every affliction, to call thee to make haste and turn. Sickness and pain cry, Turn. Poverty, the loss of friends, and every twig of the chastising rod, cry, Turn; and yet wilt thou not hearken to the call? These have come near thee, and made thee feel. They have made thee groan, and can they not make thee turn?

9. The very frame of thy nature and being itself bespeaketh thy return. Why hast thou reason, but to rule thy flesh, and serve thy Lord? Why hast thou an understanding soul, but to learn and know his will, and do it? Why hast thou a heart within thee that can love, fear, and desire, but that thou shouldst fear him, and love him, and desire after him?

10. Yea, thine own engagements by promise to the Lord do call upon thee to turn and serve him. Thou hast bound thyself to him by a baptismal covenant, and renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil; this thou hast confirmed by the profession of Christianity, and renewed it at sacraments, and in times of affliction. And wilt thou promise, and vow, and never perform, and turn to God?

Lay all these together now, and see what should be the issue. The holy Scriptures call upon thee to turn; the ministers of Christ do call upon thee to turn; the Spirit cries, Turn; thy conscience cries, Turn; the godly, by persuasions and examples, cry, Turn; the whole world, and all the creatures therein that are presented to thy consideration, cry, Turn; the patient forbearance of God cries, Turn; all the mercies which thou receivest cry, Turn; the rod of God's chastisement cries, Turn; thy reason and the frame

of thy nature bespeaks thy turning ; and so do all thy promises to God : and yet art thou not resolved to turn ?

3. Moreover, poor hard-hearted sinner, didst thou ever consider upon what terms thou standest all this while with him that calleth thee to turn ? Thou art his own, and owest him thyself, and all thou hast ; and may he not command his own ? Thou art his absolute servant, and shouldst serve no other master. Thou standest at his mercy, and thy life is in his hand ; and he is resolved to save thee upon no other terms. Thou hast many malicious spiritual enemies, that would be glad if God would but forsake thee, and let them alone with thee, and leave thee to their will ; how quickly would they deal with thee in another manner ! And thou canst not be delivered from them but by turning unto God. Thou art fallen under his wrath by thy sin already ; and thou knowest not how long his patience will yet wait. Perhaps this is the last year ; perhaps the last day. His sword is even at thy heart, while the word is in thine ear ; and if thou turn not, thou art a dead and undone man. Were thy eyes but open to see where thou standest, even upon the brink of hell, and to see how many thousands are there already that did not turn, thou wouldst see that it is time to look about thee.

Well, sirs, look inwards now, and tell me how are your hearts affected with these offers of the Lord. You hear what is his mind ; he delighteth not in your death. He calls to you, Turn, turn ; it is a fearful sign, if all this move thee not, or if it do but half move thee ; and much more if it make thee more careless in thy misery, because thou hearest of the mercifulness of God. The working of the medicine will partly tell us, whether there be any hope of the cure. Oh what glad tidings would it be to those that are now in hell, if they had but such a message from God ! What a joyful word would it be to hear this, Turn and live ! Yea, what a welcome word would it be to thyself, when thou hast felt that wrath of God but an hour ; or, if after a thousand, and ten thousand years' torment, thou couldst but hear such a word from God, Turn and live ! and yet

wilt thou neglect it, and suffer us to return without our errand ?

Behold, sinners, we are set here as the messengers of the Lord, to set before you life and death ; what say you, which of them will you choose ? Christ standeth, as it were, by thee, with heaven in one hand, and hell in the other, and offereth thee thy choice ; which wilt thou choose ? The voice of the Lord maketh the rocks to tremble. See Psal. xxix. And is it nothing to hear him threaten thee, if thou wilt not turn ? Dost thou not understand and feel this voice, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" Why, it is the voice of love, of infinite love, of thy best and kindest Friend, as thou mightest easily perceive by the motion, and yet canst thou neglect it ? It is the voice of pity and compassion. The Lord seeth whether thou art going better than thou dost, which makes him call after thee, Turn, turn. He seeth what will become of thee, if thou turn not : he thinketh with himself, Ah this poor sinner will cast himself into endless torment, if he do not turn ; I must in justice deal with him according to my righteous law : and therefore he calleth after thee, Turn, turn. O sinner ! if thou didst but know the thousandth part as well as God doth, the danger that is near you, and the misery that you are running into, we should have no more need to call after you to turn.

Moreover, this voice that calleth to thee, is the same that hath prevailed with thousands already, and called all to heaven that are now there ; and they would not now for a thousand worlds that they had made light of it, and not turned to God. Now what are they possessing that turned at God's call ? Now they perceive indeed that it was the voice of love, that meant them no more harm than their salvation. And if thou wilt obey the same call thou shalt come to the same happiness. There be millions that must for ever lament that they turned not, but there is never a soul in heaven that is sorry that they were converted.

Well, sirs, are you yet resolved, or are you not ? Do I need to say any more to you, what will you do ? Will you

turn or not? Speak, man, in thy heart to God, though thou speak not out to me: speak, lest he take thy silence for a denial; speak quickly, lest he never make thee the like offer more; speak resolvedly, and not waveringly, for he will have no indifferents to be his followers. Say in thy heart now, without any more delay, even before you stir hence, By the grace of God, I am resolved presently to turn. And because I know mine own insufficiency, I am resolved to wait on God for his grace, and follow him in his ways, and forsake my former courses and companions, and give up myself to the guidance of the Lord.

Sirs, you are not shut up in the darkness of heathenism, nor in the desperation of the damned. Life is before you, and you may have it on reasonable terms if you will; yea, on free-cost if you will accept it. The way of God lieth plain before you, the church is open to you, and you may have Christ, pardon, and holiness, if you will. What say you? Will you or will you not? If you say nay, or say nothing, and still go on, God is witness, and this congregation is witness, and your own consciences are witness, how fair an offer you had this day. Remember you might have Christ, and you would not. Remember, when you have lost it, that you might have had eternal life, as well as others, and would not: and all this because you would not turn!

But let us come to the next doctrine, and hear your reasons.

Doct. VI. The Lord condescendeth to reason the case with unconverted sinners, and to ask them why they will die.

A strange disputation it is, both as to the controversy, and as to the disputants.

1. The controversy or question propounded to dispute of, is, Why wicked men will damn themselves? or, Whether they will die rather than turn? Whether they have any sufficient reason for so doing?

2. The disputants are God and man; the most holy God, and wicked, unconverted sinners.

Is it not a strange thing which God doth seem here to suppose, that any man should be willing to die, and be damned ; yea, that this should be the case of all the wicked ; that is, of the greatest part of the world ? But you will say, This cannot be ; for nature desireth the preservation and felicity of itself, and the wicked are more selfish than others, and not less ; and therefore how can any man be willing to be damned ?

To which I answer, 1. It is a certain truth, that no man can be willing of any evil, as evil, but only as it hath some appearance of good ; much less can any man be willing to be eternally tormented. Misery, as such, is desired by none. 2. But yet for all that, it is most true, which God here teacheth us, that the cause why the wicked die and are damned, is, because they will die and be damned. And this is true in several respects.

1. Because they will go the way that leads to hell, though they are told by God and man whither it goes and where it ends ; and though God hath so often professed in his word, that if they hold on in that way they shall be condemned ; and that they shall not be saved unless they turn. "There is no peace (saith the Lord) unto the wicked," Isa. xlviii. 22 ; lvii. 21. "The way of peace they know not ; there is no judgment in their going ; they have made them crooked paths, whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace," Isa. lix. 8. They have the word and the oath of the living God for it, that if they will not turn, they shall not enter into his rest. And yet wicked they are, and wicked they will be, let God and man say what they will ; fleshly they are, and fleshly they will be, worldlings they are, and worldlings they will be, though God hath told them, that "the love of the world is enmity to God ; and that if any man love the world (in that measure) the love of the Father is not in him," James iv. 4 ; 1 John ii. 15. So that consequentially these men are willing to be damned, though not directly : they are willing of the way to hell, and love the certain cause of their torment, though they be

not willing of hell itself, and do not love the pain which they must endure.

Is not this the truth of your case, sirs? You would not burn in hell, but you will kindle the fire by your sins, and cast yourselves into it; you would not be tormented with devils in hell, but you will do that which will certainly procure it in despite of all that can be said against it. It is just as if you would say, I will drink poison, but yet I will not die. I will cast myself headlong from the top of a steeple, but yet I will not kill myself. I will thrust my knife into my heart, but yet I will not take away my life. I will put this fire into the thatch of my house, but yet I will not burn it. Just so it is with wicked men; they will be wicked, and live after the flesh in the world, and yet they would not be damned. But do you not know, that the means do lead unto the end? and that God hath by his righteous law concluded, that ye must repent or perish? He that will take poison may as well say, I will kill myself, for it will prove no better in the end: though perhaps he loved it for the sweetness of the sugar that was mixed with it, and would not be persuaded it was poison, but that he might take it and do well enough; but it is not his conceit and confidence that will save his life. So if you will be drunkards, or fornicators, or worldlings, or live after the flesh, you may as well say plainly, We will be damned; for so you shall be unless you turn. Would you not rebuke the folly of a thief or murderer that would say, I will steal or kill, but I will not be hanged; when he knows, that if he do the one, the judge in justice will see that the other be done. If he says, I will steal and murder, he may as well say plainly, I will be hanged; so if you will go on in a carnal life, you may as well say plainly, We will go to hell.

2. Moreover, the wicked will not use those means without which there is no hope of their salvation: he that will not eat, may as well say plainly he will not live, unless he can tell how to live without meat. He that will not go his journey, may as well say plainly he will not come to the

end. He that falls into the water, and will not come out, nor suffer another to help him out, may as well say plainly he will be drowned. So if you be carnal and ungodly, and will not be converted, nor use the means by which you should be converted, but think it more ado than needs, you may as well say plainly you will be damned. For if you have found out a way to be saved without conversion, you have done that which was never done before.

3. Yea, this is not all, but the wicked are unwilling even of salvation itself. Though they may desire somewhat which they call by the name of heaven, yet heaven itself, considered in the true nature of the felicity, they desire not; yea, their hearts are quite against it. Heaven is a state of perfect holiness, and of continual love and praise to God, and the wicked have no heart to this. The imperfect love, praise, and holiness which is here to be obtained, they have no mind of; much less of that which is so much greater: the joys of heaven are of so pure and spiritual a nature, that the heart of the wicked cannot truly desire them.

So that by this time you may see on what ground it is that God supposeth that the wicked are willing of their own destruction: they will not turn, though they must turn or die. They will rather venture on certain misery, than be converted; and then to quiet themselves in their sins, they will make themselves believe that they shall nevertheless escape.

2. And as the controversy is matter of wonder (that ever men should be such enemies to themselves, as wilfully to cast away their souls), so are the disputants too: that God should stoop so low, as thus to plead the case with man; and that man should be so strangely blind and obstinate as to need all this in so plain a case; yea, and to resist all this, when their own salvation lieth upon the issue.

No wonder if they will not hear us that are men, when they will not hear the Lord himself: as God saith, when he sent the prophet to the Israelites, "The house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted,"

Ezek. iii 7. No wonder if they can plead against a minister, or a godly neighbour, when they will plead against the Lord himself, even against the plainest passages of his word, and think they have reason on their side. When they weary the Lord with their words, they say, "Wherein have we wearied him?" Mal. ii. 7. The priests that despised his name, durst ask, "Wherein have we despised thy name?" And when they "polluted his altar, and made the tables of the Lord contemptible," they durst say, "Wherein have we polluted them?" Mal. vi. 1, 7. But, "Woe unto him (saith the Lord) that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou?" Isa. xlv. 9.

Quest. But why is it that God will reason the case with man?

Answ. 1. Because that man, being a reasonable creature, is accordingly to be dealt with; and by reason to be persuaded and overcome. God hath therefore endowed them with reason, that they might use it for him. One would think a reasonable creature should not go against the clearest and greatest reason in the world, when it is set before him.

2. At least men shall see that God did require nothing of them that was unreasonable, but that whatever he commandeth them, and whatever he forbiddeth them, he hath all the right reason in the world on his side, and they have good reason to obey him, but none to disobey. And thus even the damned shall be forced to justify God, and confess that it was but reason that they should have turned to him; and they shall be forced to condemn themselves, and confess that they have little reason to cast away themselves by the neglecting of his grace in the day of their visitation.

Use. Look up your best and strongest reasons, sinners, if you will make good your way: you see now with whom you have to deal. What sayest thou, unconverted, sensual wretch? Darest thou venture upon a dispute with God? Art thou able to confute him? Art thou ready to enter the lists? God asketh thee, Why wilt thou die? Art thou

furnished with a sufficient answer? Wilt thou undertake to prove that God is mistaken, and that thou art in the right? Oh what an undertaking is that! Why either he or you is mistaken, when he is for your conversion, and you are against it. He calls upon you to turn, and you will not: he bids you do it presently, even to-day, while it is called to-day, and you delay, and think it time enough hereafter. He saith, it must be a total change, and you must be holy and new creatures, and born again; and you think that less may serve the turn, and that it is enough to patch up the old man, without becoming new. Who is in the right now, God or you? God calleth on you to turn, and to live a holy life, and you will not; by your disobedient lives it appears you will not. If you will, why do you not? Why have you not done it all this while? And why do you not fall upon it yet? Your wills have the command of your lives. We may certainly conclude, that you are unwilling to turn, when you do not turn. And why will you not? Can you give any reason for it, that is worthy to be called a reason?

I that am but a worm, your fellow-creature, of a shallow capacity, dare challenge the wisest of you all to reason the case with me, while I plead my Maker's cause; and I need not be discouraged, when I know I plead but the cause that God pleadeth, and contend for him that will have the best at last. Had I but these two general grounds against you, I am sure that you have no good reason on your side.

1. I am sure it can be no good reason, which is against the God of truth and reason; it cannot be light that is contrary to the sun. There is no knowledge in any creature, but what it had from God; and therefore none can be wiser than God. It were damnable presumption for the highest angel to compare with his Creator; what is it then for a lump of dirt, an ignorant sot, that knoweth not himself, nor his own soul; that knoweth but little of the things which he seeth, yea, that is more ignorant than many of his neighbours; to set himself against the wisdom of the Lord? It

is one of the fullest discoveries of the horrible wickedness of carnal men, and the stark madness of such who sin, that so silly a mole dare contradict his Maker, and call in question the word of God: yea, that those people in our parishes, that are so beastly ignorant, that they cannot give us a reasonable answer concerning the very principles of religion, are yet so wise in their own conceit, that they dare question the plainest truths of God, yea, contradict them, and cavil against them, when they can scarce speak sense, and will believe them no farther than agreeth with their foolish wisdom.

2. And as I know that God must needs be in the right, so I know the case is so palpable and gross which he pleadeth against, that no man can have reason for it. Is it possible that a man can have any good reason to break his master's laws, and reason to dishonour the Lord of glory, and reason to abuse the Lord that bought him? Is it possible that a man can have any good reason to damn his own immortal soul? Mark the Lord's question, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" Is eternal death a thing to be desired? Are you in love with hell? What reason have you wilfully to perish? If you think you have some reason to sin, should you not remember that "death is the wages of sin?" Rom. vi. 23. And think whether you have any reason to undo yourselves, body and soul, for ever? You should not only ask whether you love the adder, but whether you love the sting. It is such a thing for a man to cast away his everlasting happiness, and to sin against God, that no good reason can be given for it; but the more any one pleads for it, the more mad he sheweth himself to be. Had you a lordship or a kingdom offered to you for every sin that you commit, it were not reason but madness to accept it. Could you by every sin obtain the highest thing on earth that flesh desireth, it were of no considerable value to persuade you in reason to commit it. If it were to please your greatest and dearest friends, or obey the greatest prince on earth, or to save your lives, or to escape the greatest earthly misery, all these are of no consideration to draw a man in reason to

the committing of one sin. If it were a right hand or a right eye that would hinder your salvation, it would be the gainfullest way to cast it away, rather than go to hell to save it. For there is no saving a part, when you lose the whole. So exceeding great are the matters of eternity, that nothing in this world deserveth once to be named in comparison with them, nor can any earthly thing, though it were life, or crowns and kingdoms, be a reasonable excuse for matters of so high and everlasting consequence. A man can have no reason to cross his ultimate end. Heaven is such a thing, that if you lose it, nothing can supply the want, or make up the loss. And hell is such a thing, that if you suffer it, nothing can remove your misery, or give you ease and comfort. And therefore nothing can be a valuable consideration to excuse you for neglecting your own salvation. For saith our Saviour, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Mark viii. 36.

O sirs! did you but know what matters they are we are now speaking to you of! The saints in heaven have other kind of thoughts of these things. If the devil could come to them that live in the sight and love of God, and should offer them a cup of ale, or a whore, or merry company, or sport, to entice them away from God and glory, I pray you tell me, how do you think they would entertain the motion? Nay, if he should offer them to be kings on the earth, do you think this would entice them down from heaven? Oh, with what hatred and holy scorn would they disdain and reject the motion? and why should not you do so that have heaven opened to your faith, if you had but faith to see it? There is never a soul in hell, but knows by this time, that it was a mad exchange to let go heaven for fleshly pleasure; and that it is not a little mirth, or pleasure, or worldly riches or honour, or the good will or the word of men, that will quench hell-fire, or make him a saver that loseth his soul. Oh if you had heard what I believe, if you had seen what I believe, and that on the credit of the word of God, you would say, there can be no reason to warrant a man to

damn his soul ; you durst not sleep quietly another night, before you had resolved to turn and live.

If you see a man put his hand into the fire till it burn off, you marvel at it ; but this is a thing that a man may have reason for, as Bishop Cragmer had when he burnt off his hand for subscribing to popery. If you see a man cut off a leg, or an arm, it is a sad sight ; but this is a thing a man may have good reason for ; as many a man doth to save his life. If you see a man give his body to be burned to ashes, and to be tormented with strappadoes and racks, and refuse deliverance when it is offered ; this is a hard case to flesh and blood. But this a man may have good reason for ; as you may see in Heb. xi. 33-36 ; and as many a hundred martyrs have done. But for a man to forsake the Lord that made him, and for a man to run into the fire of hell, when he is told of it, and entreated to turn, that he may be saved ; this is a thing that can have no reason in the world, that is reason indeed, to justify or excuse is. For heaven will pay for the loss of any thing that we can lose to get it, or for any labour which we bestow for it. But nothing can pay for the loss of heaven.

I beseech you now, let his word come nearer to your hearts. As you are convinced you have no reason to destroy yourselves, so tell me what reason you have to refuse to turn, and live to God ; what reason hath the veriest worldling, or drunkard, or ignorant, careless sinner of you all, why you should not be as holy as any you know, and be as careful for your souls as any other ? Will not hell be as hot to you as to others ? Should not your own souls be as dear to you, as theirs to them ? Hath not God as much authority over you ? Why then will ye not become a sanctified people as well as they ?

O sirs, when God bringeth down the matter to the very principles of nature, and shews you that you have no more reason to be ungodly than you have to damn your own souls ; if yet you will not understand and turn, it seems a desperate case that you are in.

And now either you have reasons for what you do, or you have not. If not, will you go on against reason itself? Will you do that which you have no reason for? But if you think you have, produce them, and make the best of your matter; reason the case a little while with your fellow-creature, which is far easier than to reason the case with God. Tell me, man, here, before the Lord, as if thou wert to die this hour, why shouldst thou not resolve to turn this day, before thou stir from the place thou standest in? What reason hast thou to deny, or to delay? Hast thou any reasons that satisfieth thine own conscience for it? or any that thou darest own and plead at the bar of God? If thou hast, let us hear them, bring them forth, and make them good. But alas! what poor stuff, what nonsense, instead of reasons, do we daily hear from ungodly men! But for their necessity, I should be ashamed to name them.

1. One saith, If none shall be saved but such converted and sanctified ones as you talk of, heaven would be but empty; then God help a great many.

Ans. What, it seems you think God doth not know, or else that he is not to be believed: measure not all by yourself; God hath thousands and millions of his sanctified ones; but yet they are few in comparison of the world, as Christ himself hath told us in Matt. vii. 13, 14, and Luke xii. 32. It better beseems you to make that use of this truth which Christ teacheth you: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it: but wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat," Luke xiii. 22-24. "And fear not, little flock (saith Christ to his sanctified ones), for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," Luke xii. 32.

Object. 2. I am sure if such as I go to hell, we shall have store of company.

Ans. And will that be any ease or comfort to you? or do you think you may not have company enough in heaven? Will you be undone for company? or will you not

believe that God will execute his threatenings, because there are so many that are guilty? All these are silly, unreasonable conceits.

Object. 3. But all men are sinners, even the best of you all.

Answ. But all are not unconverted sinners. The godly live not in gross sins; and their very infirmities are their grief and burden, which they daily long, and pray, and strive to be rid of. Sin hath not dominion over them.

Object. 4. I do not see that professors are any better than other men; they will overreach and oppress, and are as covetous as any.

Answ. Whatever hypocrites are, it is not so with those that are sanctified. God hath thousands and ten thousands that are otherwise, though the malicious world doth accuse them of what they can never prove, and of that which never entered into their hearts. And commonly they charge them with heart sins, which none can see but God; because they can charge them with no such wickedness in their lives as they are guilty of themselves.

Object. 5. But I am no whoremonger, nor drunkard, nor oppressor; and therefore why should you call upon me to be converted?

Answ. As if you were not born after the flesh, and had not lived after the flesh, as well as others. Is it not as great a sin as any of these, for a man to have an earthly mind, and to love the world above God, and to have a faithless, unhumbled heart? Nay, let me tell you more, that many persons that avoid disgraceful sins, are fast glued to the world, and as much slaves to the flesh, and as strange to God, and averse to heaven, in their more civil course, as others are in their more shameful, notorious sins.

Object. 6. But I mean nobody any harm, and do no harm; and why then should God condemn me?

Answ. Is it no harm to neglect the Lord that made thee, and the work for which thou camest into the world, and prefer the creature before the Creator, and neglect grace that is daily offered thee? It is the depth of thy sinfulness,

to be insensible of it. The dead feel not that they are dead. If once thou wert made alive, thou wouldst see more amiss in thyself, and marvel at thyself for making so light of it.

Object. 7. I think you will make men mad under a pretence of converting them : it is enough to rack the brains of simple people, to muse so much on matters too high for them.

Ans. 1. Can you be madder than you are already? Or at least, can there be a more dangerous madness, than to neglect your everlasting welfare, and wilfully undo yourselves?

2. A man is never well in his wits till he be converted ; he neither knows God, nor sin, nor Christ, nor the world, nor himself, nor what his business is on the earth, so as to set himself about it, till he be converted. The Scripture saith that the wicked are unreasonable men, 2 Thess. iii. 2 ; and " that the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God," 1 Cor. i. 20 ; and Luke xv. 17, it is said of the prodigal, " that when he came to himself," he resolved to return. It is a wise world when men will disobey God, and run to hell for fear of being out of their wits!

3. What is there in the work that Christ calls you to, that should drive a man out of his wits? Is it the loving of God, and calling upon him, and comfortable thinking of the glory to come, and the forsaking of our sins, and the loving of one another, and delighting ourselves in the service of God? Are these such things as should make men mad?

4. And whereas you say, that these matters are too high for us, you accuse God himself for making this our work, and giving us his word, and commanding all that will be blessed, to meditate in it day and night. Are the matters which we are made for, and which we live for, too high for us to meddle with? This is plainly to unman us, and to make beasts of us, as if we were like to them that must meddle with no higher matters than what belongeth to flesh and earth. If heaven be too high for you to think on, and to provide for, it will be too high for you ever to possess.

5. If God should sometimes suffer any weak-headed person to be distracted by thinking of eternal things, this is because they misunderstand them, and run without a guide. And of the two, I had rather be in the case of such a one, than of the mad, unconverted world, that take their distraction to be their wisdom.

Object. 8. I do not think that God doth care so much what men think, or speak, or do, as to make so great a matter of it.

Ans. It seems then, you take the word of God to be false; and then what will you believe? But your own reason might teach you better, if you believe not the Scriptures; for you see God doth not set so light by us, but that he vouchsafed to make us, and still preserveth us, and daily upholdeth us, and provideth for us: and will any wise man make a curious frame for nothing? Will you make or buy a clock, or a watch, and daily look to it, and not care whether it go true or false? Surely if you believe not a particular eye of Providence observing your hearts and lives, you cannot believe or expect any particular Providence to observe your wants and troubles, to relieve you. And if God had so little cared for you, as you imagine, you would never have lived till now; a hundred diseases would have striven which should first destroy you. Yea, the devil would have haunted you, and fetched you away alive, as the great fishes devour the less; and as ravenous beasts and birds devour others. You cannot think that God made man for no end or use; and if he made him for any, it was sure for himself. And can you think he cares not whether his end be accomplished, and whether we do the work that we are made for?

Yea, by this atheistical objection, you make God to have made and upheld all the world in vain. For what are all other lower creatures for, but for man? What doth the earth but bear us, and nourish us? And the beasts do serve us with their labours and lives; and so of the rest. And hath God made so glorious a habitation, and set man to dwell in it, and made all his servants; and now doth he

look for nothing at his hands? nor care how he thinks, or speaks, or lives? This is most unreasonable.

Object. 9. It was a better world when men did not make so much ado in religion.

Answ. It hath ever been the custom to praise the time past. That world that you speak of, was wont to say, It was a better world in our forefathers' days, and so did they of their forefathers. This is but an old custom, because we all feel the evil of our own times, but we see not that which was before us.

2. Perhaps you speak as you think: worldlings think the world is at the best, when it is agreeable to their minds, and when they have most mirth and worldly pleasure. And I doubt not but the devil, as well as you, would say, that then it was a better world: for then he had more service, and less disturbance; but the world is best, when God is most loved, regarded, and obeyed. And how else will you know when the world is good or bad, but by this?

Object. 10. There are so many ways and religions, that we know not which to be of; and therefore we will be even as we are.

Answ. Because there are many, will you be of that way that you may be sure is wrong? None are farther out of the way, than worldly, fleshly, unconverted sinners. For they do not err in this or that opinion, as many sects do; but in the very scope and drift of their lives. If you were going a journey that your life lay on, would you stop or turn again, because you meet some cross-ways, or because you saw some travellers go the horse-way and some the foot-way, and some perhaps break over the hedge, yea, and some miss the way? Or would you not rather be the more careful to inquire the way? If you have some servants that know not how to do your work right, and some that are unfaithful, would you take it well at any of the rest, that would therefore be idle and do you no service, because they see the rest so bad?

Object. 11. I do not see that it goes any better with those

that are so godly, than with other men. They are as poor, and in as much trouble, as others.

Answ. And perhaps in much more, when God sees it meet. They take not an earthly prosperity for their wages. They have laid up their treasure and hopes in another world, or else they are not Christians indeed. The less they have, the more is behind : and they are content to wait till then.

Object. 12. When you have said all that you can, I am resolved to hope well, and trust in God, and do as well as I can, and not make so much ado.

Answ. 1. Is that doing as well as you can, when you will not turn to God, but your heart is against his holy and diligent service? It is as well as you will, indeed : but that is your misery.

2. My desire is that you should hope and trust in God. But for what is it that you will hope? Is it to be saved, if you turn and be sanctified? For this you have God's promise ; and therefore hope for it, and spare not ; but if you hope to be saved without conversion and a holy life, this is not to hope in God, but in Satan, or yourselves ; for God hath given you no such promise, but told you the contrary ; but it is Satan and self-love that made you such promises, and raised you to such hopes.

Well, if these, and such as these, be all you have to say against conversion and a holy life, your all is nothing, and worse than nothing ; and if these, and such as these, seem reasons sufficient to persuade you to forsake God, and cast yourselves into hell, the Lord deliver you from such reasons, and from such blind understandings, and from such senseless, hardened hearts. Dare you stand to every one of these reasons at the bar of God? Do you think it will then serve your turn, to say, Lord, I did not turn, because I had so much to do in the world, or because I did not like the lives of some professors, or because I saw men of so many minds? Oh how easily will the light of that day confound and shame such reasons as these! Had you the world to look after? Let the world which you served, now pay you your wages,

and save you if it can! Had you not a better world to look after first? And were ye not commanded to seek first God's kingdom and righteousness, and promised, that other things shall be added to you? Matt. vi. 33. And were you not told, "that godliness was profitable to all things, having the promise of this life, and of that which is to come?" 1 Tim. iv. 8. Did the sins of professors hinder you? You should rather have been the more heedful, and learned by their falls to beware; and have been the more careful, and not to be more careless; it was the Scripture and not their lives, that was your rule. Did the many opinions of the world hinder you? Why, the Scripture that was your rule, did teach you but one way, and that was the right way; if you had followed that, even in so much as was plain and easy, you would never have miscarried. Will not such answers as these confound and silence you? If these will not, God hath those that will. When he asketh the man, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?" Matt. xxii. 12; that is, what dost thou in my church amongst professed Christians, without a holy heart and life? what answer did he make? Why, the text saith, "He was speechless," he had nothing to say. The clearness of the case, and the majesty of God, will then easily stop the mouths of the most confident of you, though you will not be put down by any thing that we can say to you now, but will make good your cause, be it never so bad. I know already, that never a reason that now you can give me, will do you any good at last, when your case must be opened before the Lord and all the world.

Nay, I scarce think that your own consciences are well satisfied with your reasons. For if they are, it seems then you have not so much as a purpose to repent; but if you do but purpose to repent, it seems you do not put much confidence in your reasons which you bring against it.

What say you, unconverted sinners? Have you any good reason to give why you should not turn, and presently turn with all your hearts? or will you go to hell in despite of reason itself? Bethink you what you do, in time, for it

will shortly be too late to bethink you. Can you find any fault with God, or his work, or wages? Is he a bad master? Is the devil whom ye serve a better? or is the flesh a better? Is there any harm in a holy life? Is a life of worldliness and ungodliness better? Do you think in your conscience that it would do you any harm to be converted, and live a holy life? What harm can it do you? Is it harm to you to have the Spirit of Christ within you? and to have a cleansed, purified heart? If it be bad to be holy, why doth God say, "Be ye holy, for I am holy?" 1 Pet. i. 15, 16; Lev. xx. 7. Is it evil to be like God? Is it not said, that "God made man in his own image?" Why, this holiness is his image: this Adam lost, and this Christ by his word and Spirit would restore you, as he doth to all that he will save. Why were you baptized into the Holy Ghost, and why do you baptize your children into the Holy Ghost, as your Sanctifier, if ye will not be sanctified by him, but think it a hurt to be sanctified? Tell me truly, as before the Lord, though you are loth to live a holy life, had you not rather die in the case of those that do so, than of others? If you were to die this day, had you not rather die in the case of a converted man than of the unconverted? of a holy and heavenly man, than of a carnal, earthly man? And would you not say as Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his?" Numb. xxiii. 10. And why will you not now be of the mind that you will be of then? First or last you must come to this; either to be converted, or to wish you had been when it is too late.

But what is it that you are afraid of losing if you turn? Is it your friends? You will but change them: God will be your friend, and Christ and the Spirit will be your friend, and every Christian will be your friend. You will get one Friend that will stand in more stead than all the friends in the world could have done. The friends you lose would have but enticed you to hell, but could not have delivered you; but the Friend you get will save you from hell, and bring you to his own eternal rest.

Is it your pleasures that you are afraid of losing? You

think you shall never have a merry day again, if once you be converted. Alas! that you should think it a greater pleasure to live in foolish sports and merriments, and please your flesh, than live in the believing thoughts of glory, and in the love of God, and in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, in which the state of grace consisteth, Rom. xiv. 17. If it be a greater pleasure to you to think of your lands and inheritance (if you were lord of all the country), than it is to a child to play with pins; why should it not be a greater joy to you to think of the kingdom of heaven being yours, than all the riches or pleasures of the world? As it is but foolish childishness that makes children so delight in gawds, that they would not leave them for all your lands; so it is but foolish worldliness, and fleshliness, and wickedness, that makes you so much delight in your houses, and lands, and meat, and drink, and ease, and honour, as that you would not part with them for heavenly delights. But what will you do for pleasure when these are gone? Do you not think of that? When your pleasures end in horror, and go out with a stinking snuff, the pleasures of the saints are then at the best. I have had myself but a little taste of the heavenly pleasures, in the forethoughts of the blessed approaching day, and in the present persuasions of the love of God in Christ; but I have taken too deep a draught of earthly pleasures (so that you may see, if I be partial, it is on your side); and yet I must profess from that little experience, that there is no comparison. There is more joy to be had in a day (if the sun of life shine clear upon us) in the state of holiness, than in a whole life of sinful pleasure: I had "rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. A day in his courts is better than a thousand" any where else, Psal. lxxxiv. 10. The mirth of the wicked is like the laughter of a madman, that knows not his own misery: and therefore Solomon saith of such laughter, "It is mad; and of mirth, What doth it?—It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting; for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart.

Sorrow is better than laughter ; for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning ; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than to hear the song of fools ; for as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool," Eccl. ii. 2 ; vii. 2-6. All the pleasure of fleshly things is but like the scratching of a man that hath the itch ; it is his disease that makes him desire it : and a wise man had rather be without his pleasure than be troubled with his itch. Your loudest laughter is but like that of a man that is tickled, he laughs when he hath no cause of joy. And it is a wiser thing for a man to give all his estate, and his life, to be tickled to make him laugh, than for you to part with the love of God, and the comforts of holiness, and the hopes of heaven, and to cast yourselves into damnation, that you may have your flesh tickled with the pleasure of sin for a little while. Judge as you are men whether this be a wise man's part. It is your carnal, unsanctified nature that makes a holy life seem grievous to you, and a course of sensuality seem more delightful. If you will but turn, the Holy Ghost will give you another nature and inclination, and then it will be more pleasant to you to be rid of your sin, than now it is to keep it ; and you will then say that you knew not what a comfortable life was till now, and that it was never well with you till God and holiness were your delight.

Quest. But how cometh it to pass, that men should be so unreasonable in the matters of salvation ? They have wit enough in other matters ; what makes them so loth to be converted, that there should need so many words in so plain a case ; and all will not do, but the most will live and die unconverted ?

Ans. To name them only in few words, the causes are these :

1. Men are naturally in love with earth and flesh ; they are born sinners, and their nature hath an enmity to God and godliness, as the nature of a serpent hath to a man. And when all that we can say goes against the habi-

tual inclinations of their natures, no marvel if it little prevail.

2. They are in darkness, and know not the very things that they hear. Like a man that was born blind, and hears a high commendation of the light : but what will hearing do, unless he sees it? They know not what God is, nor what is the power of the cross of Christ, nor what the Spirit of holiness is, nor what it is to live in love by faith. They know not the certainty, and suitableness, and excellency of the heavenly inheritance. They know not what conversion and a holy mind and conversation are, even when they hear of them. They are in a mist of ignorance, they are lost and bewildered in sin ; like a man that hath lost himself in the night, and knows not where he is, nor how to come to himself again, till the daylight do recover him.

3. They are wilfully confident that they need no conversion, but some partial amendment ; and that they are in the way to heaven already, and are converted, when they are not. And if you meet a man that is quite out of his way, you may long enough call on him to turn back again, if he will not believe you that he is out of the way.

4. They are become slaves to their flesh, and drowned in the world to make provision for it. Their lusts, and passions, and appetites have distracted them, and got such a hand over them, that they cannot tell how to deny them, or how to mind any thing else. So that the drunkard saith, I love a cup of good drink, and cannot forbear it. The glutton saith, I love good cheer, and I cannot forbear. The fornicator saith, I love to have my lusts fulfilled, and I cannot forbear. And the gamester loveth to have his sports, and he cannot forbear. So that they are even become captivated slaves to their flesh, and their very wilfulness is become an impotency, and what they would not do they say they cannot. And the worldling is so taken up with earthly things, that he hath neither heart, nor mind, nor time for heavenly ; but as in Pharaoh's dream, Gen. xli. 4, the lean kine did eat up the fat ones, so this lean and barren earth do eat up all the thoughts of heaven.

5. Some are so carried away by the stream of evil company, that they are possessed with hard thoughts of a godly life, by hearing them speak against it : or at least they think they may venture to do as they see most do ; and so they hold on in their sinful ways. And when one is cut off and cast into hell, and another snatched away from among them to the same condemnation, it doth not much daunt them, because they see not whither they are gone. Poor wretches ! they hold on in their ungodliness for all this ; for they little know that their companions are now lamenting it in torments. In Luke xvi. the rich man in hell would fain have had one to warn his five brethren, lest they should come to that place of torment. It is like he knew their minds and lives, and knew that they were hasting thither, and little dreamed that he was there ; yea, and little would have believed one that should have told them so. I remember a passage a gentleman told me he saw upon a bridge over the Severn.* A man was driving a flock of fat lambs, and something meeting them and hindering their passage, one of the lambs leaped upon the wall of the bridge, and his legs slipping from under him, he fell into the stream ; and the rest seeing him, did one after another leap over the bridge into the stream, and were all, or almost all, drowned. Those that were behind, did little know what was become of them that were gone before, but thought that they might venture to follow their companions. But as soon as ever they were over the wall and falling headlong, the case was altered. Even so it is with unconverted, carnal men. One dieth by them, and drops into hell, and another follows the same way ; and yet they will go after them, because they think not whither they are going. Oh ! but when death has once opened their eyes, and they see what is on the other side of the wall, even in another world, then what would they give to be where they were !

6. Moreover, they have a subtle, malicious enemy, that is unseen of them, and plays his game in the dark ; and it

* Mr R. Rowley, of Shrewsbury, upon Acham Bridge.

is his principal business to hinder their conversion ; and therefore to keep them where they are, by persuading them not to believe the Scriptures, or not to trouble their minds with these matters ; or by persuading them to think ill of a godly life, or to think that it is more ado than needs, and that they may be saved without conversion, and without all this stir ; and that God is so merciful, that he will not damn any such as they, or, at least, that they may stay a little longer, and take their pleasure, and follow the world a little longer yet, and then let it go, and repent hereafter ; and by such juggling, deluding cheats as these, the devil keeps most in his captivity, and leadeth them to his misery.

These, and such like impediments as these, do keep so many thousands unconverted, when God hath done so much, and Christ hath suffered so much, and ministers have said so much, for their conversion ; when their reasons are silenced, and they are not able to answer the Lord that calls after them, " Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die ? " yet all comes to nothing with the greatest part of them ; and they leave us no more to do after all, but to sit down and lament their wilful misery.

I have now shewed you the reasonableness of God's commands, and the unreasonableness of wicked men's disobedience. If nothing will serve turn, but men will yet refuse to turn, we are next to consider whose doing it is if they be damned. And this brings me to the last doctrine ; which is,

Doct. VII. That if, after all this, men will not turn, it is not of God that they are condemned, but of themselves, even their own wilfulness. They die because they will die, that is, because they will not turn.

If you will go to hell, what remedy ? God here acquits himself of your blood : it shall not lie on him if you be lost. A negligent minister may draw it upon him ; and those that encourage you, or hinder you not, in sin, may draw it upon them ; but be sure of it, it shall not lie upon God. Saith the Lord concerning his unprofitable vineyard, " Judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard : what could have

been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it?" When he had "planted it in a fruitful soil, and fenced it, and gathered out the stones, and planted it with the choicest vines," what should he have done more to it? Isa. v. 1-4. He hath made you men, and endued you with reason; he hath furnished you with external necessities, all creatures are at your service; he hath given you a righteous, perfect law; when you had broken it, and undone yourselves, he had pity on you, and sent his Son by a miracle of condescending mercy to die for you, and be a sacrifice for your sins, and he "was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." The Lord Jesus hath made you a deed of gift of himself, and eternal life with him, on the condition you will but accept it, and return. He hath, on this reasonable condition, offered you the free pardon of all your sins: he hath written this in his word, and sealed it by his Spirit, and sent it you by his ministers; they have made the offer to you a hundred and a hundred times, and called you to accept it, and turn to God. They have in his name entreated you, and reasoned the case with you, and answered all your frivolous objections. He hath long waited on you, and staid your leisure, and suffered you to abuse him to his face. He hath mercifully sustained you in the midst of your sins; he hath compassed you about with all sorts of mercies; he hath also intermixed afflictions, to mind you of your folly, and call you to your wits; and his Spirit hath been often striving with your hearts, and saying there, Turn sinner, turn to him that calleth thee: whither art thou going? What art thou doing? Dost thou know what will be the end? How long wilt thou hate thy friends, and love thine enemies? When wilt thou let go all, and turn, and deliver up thyself to God, and give thy Redeemer the possession of thy soul? When shall it once be? These pleadings have been used with thee; and when thou hast delayed, thou hast been urged to make haste, and God hath called to thee, "To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your heart. Why not now without any more delay?" Life hath been set before you; the joys of heaven have been opened to you in

the gospel; the certainty of them have been manifested; the certainty of the everlasting torments of the damned have been declared to you, unless you would have had a sight of heaven and hell, what could you desire more? Christ hath been, as it were, set forth crucified before your eyes, Gal. iii.

1. You have been a hundred times told, that you are but lost men, till you come unto him; as oft as you have been told of the evil of sin, and of the vanity of sin, the world, and all the pleasures and wealth it can afford; of the shortness and uncertainty of your lives, and the endless duration of the joy or torment of the life to come. All this, and more than this, have you been told, and told again, even till you were weary of hearing it, and till you could make the lighter of it, because you had so often heard it; like the smith's dog, that is brought, by custom, to sleep under the noise of the hammers, when the sparks do fly about his ears: and though all this have not converted you, yet you are alive, and might have mercy, to this day, if you had but hearts to entertain it. And now let reason itself be judge, whether it be of God or you, if after all this you will be unconverted, and be damned? If you die now it is because you will die. What should be said more to you? or what course should be taken, that is liker to prevail? Are you able to say and make it good, We would fain have been converted and become new creatures, but we could not; we would have changed our company, and our thoughts, and our discourse, but we could not. Why could you not if you would? What hindered you, but the wickedness of your hearts? Who forced you to sin? or who did hold you back from duty? Had you not the same teaching, and time, and liberty to be godly as your godly neighbours had? Why then could you not have been godly as well as they? Were the church doors shut against you, or did you not keep away yourselves? or sit and sleep, or hear as if you did not hear? Did God put in any exceptions against you in his word, when he invited sinners to return, and when he promised mercy to those that do return? Did he say, I will pardon all that repent, except thee? Did he shut you out

from the liberty of his holy worship? Did he forbid you to pray to him, any more than others? You know he did not. God did not drive you away from him, but you forsook him, and ran away yourselves. And when he called you to him, you would not come. If God had excepted you out of the general promise and offer of mercy, or had said to you, Stand off, I will have nothing to do with such as you; pray not to me, for I will not hear you. If you repent never so much, and cry for mercy never so much, I will not regard you. If God had left you nothing to trust to but desperation, then you had had a fair excuse. You might have said, To what end should I repent and turn, when it will do no good? But this was not your case. You might have had Christ to be your Lord and Saviour, your Head and Husband, as well as others, and you would not; because that ye felt not yourselves sick enough for the physician; and because you could not spare your disease: in your hearts ye said as those rebels, Luke xix. 14, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Christ would have gathered you under the wings of his salvation, and ye would not, Matt. xxiii. 27. What desires of your welfare did the Lord express in his holy word! With what compassion did he stand over you and say, "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and that they had walked in my way!" Psal. lxxxi. 13. "Oh that there were such a heart in this people, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" Deut. v. 29. "Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, and that they would consider their latter end!" Deut. xxxii. 29. He would have been your God, and done all for you that your souls could well desire; but you loved the world and your flesh above him, and therefore you would not hearken to him; though you complimented with him, and gave him high titles, yet when he came to the closing, you would have none of him. No marvel then, if "he gave you up to your own heart's lusts, and you walked in your own counsels," Psal. lxxxi. 11, 12. He condescends to reason, and pleads the case with you, and asks

you, What is there in me, or my service, that you should be so much against me? What harm have I done thee, sinner? Have I deserved this unkind dealing at thy hands? Many mercies have I shewed thee; for which of them dost thou despise me? Is it I, or is it Satan, that is thy enemy? Is it I, or is it thy carnal self, that would undo thee? Is it a holy life, or a life of sin, that thou hast cause to fly from? If thou be undone, thou procurest this to thyself, by forsaking me the Lord, that would have saved thee, Jer. ii. 17. "Doth not thine own wickedness correct thee, and thy sin reprove thee: thou mayest see that it is an evil and bitter thing, that thou hast forsaken me," Jer. ii. 19. "What iniquity have ye found in me, that you have followed after vanity, and forsaken me?" Jer. ii. 5, 6. He calleth out, as it were, to the brutes to hear the controversy he hath against you. "Hear, O ye mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done to thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me; for I brought thee out of Egypt, and redeemed thee," &c. Mic. ii. 2-5. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers!" &c. Isa. i. 2-4. "Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy Father that bought thee, made thee, and established thee?" Deut. xxxii. 6. When he saw that you forsook him even for nothing, and turned away from your Lord and life, to hunt after the chaff and feathers of the world, he told you of your folly, and called you to a more profitable employment. "Wherefore do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your

soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.—Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," Isa. lv. 1-3, 6, 7. And so Isa. i. 16-18. And when you would not hear, what complaints have you put him to, charging it on you as your wilfulness and stubbornness! "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid: for my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water," Jer. ii. 12, 13. Many a time hath Christ proclaimed that free invitation to you, "Let him that is athirst, come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17. But you put him to complain after all his offers, "They will not come to me that they may have life," John v. 40. He hath invited you to feast with him in the kingdom of his grace; and you have had excuses from your grounds, and your cattle, and your worldly business; and when you would not come, you have said you could not, and provoked him to resolve that you should never taste of his supper, Luke xiv. 15-23. And whose act is it now but your own? And what can you say is the chief cause of your damnation, but your own wills? You would be damned. The whole case is laid open by Christ himself, Prov. i. 20, to the end: "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets: she crieth in the chief place of concourse: How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear

cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer: they shall seek me early but they shall not find me; for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from the fear of evil." I thought best to recite the whole text at large to you, because it doth so fully shew the cause of the destruction of the wicked. It is not because God would not teach them, but because they would not learn. It is not because God would not call them, but because they would not turn at his reproof. Their wilfulness is their undoing.

Use. From what hath been said, you may further learn these following things:—

1. From hence you may see, not only what blasphemy and impiety it is to lay the blame of men's destruction upon God, but also how unfit these wicked wretches are to bring in such a charge against their Maker. They cry out upon God, and say, he gives them no grace, and his threatenings are severe, and God forbid that all should be damned that be not converted and sanctified, and they think it hard measure, that a short sin should have an endless suffering; and if they be damned, they say, they cannot help it. When in the mean time they are busy about their own destruction, even cutting the throat of their own souls, and will not be persuaded to hold their hand. They think God were cruel if he should damn them, and yet they are cruel to themselves, and they will run into the fire of hell, when God hath told them it is a little before them; and neither entreaties nor threatenings, nor any thing that can be said, will stop them. We see them almost undone; their careless, worldly, fleshly lives, do tell us, that they are in the power of the devil; we know, if they die before they are con-

verted, all the world cannot save them ; and knowing the uncertainty of their lives, we are afraid every day lest they drop into the fire. And, therefore, we entreat them to pity their own souls, and not to undo themselves when mercy is at hand ; and they will not hear us. We entreat them to cast away their sin, and come to Christ without delay, and to have some mercy on themselves ; but they will have none. And yet they think that God must be cruel if he condemn them. O wilful, wretched sinners ! it is not God that is so cruel to you ; it is you that are cruel to yourselves. You are told you must turn or burn, and yet you turn not. You are told, that if you will needs keep your sins, you shall keep the curse of God with them, and yet you will keep them. You are told, that there is no way to happiness but by holiness, and yet you will not be holy. What would you have God say more to you ? What would you have him do with his mercy ? He offered it to you, and you will not have it. You are in the ditch of sin and misery, and he would give you his hand to help you out, and you refuse his help ; he would cleanse you of your sins, and you had rather keep them. You love your lusts, and love your gluttony, and sports, and drunkenness, and will not let them go ; and would you have him bring you to heaven whether you will or no ? or would you have him to bring you and your sins to heaven together ? Why, that is an impossibility ; you may as well expect he should turn the sun into darkness. What ! an un-sanctified, fleshly heart be in heaven ? It cannot be ! “ There entereth nothing that is unclean,” Rev. xxi. 17. “ For what communication hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial ?” 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. “ All the day long hath he stretched out his hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people,” Rom. x. 25. What will ye do now ? Will you cry to God for mercy ? Why, God calleth upon you to have mercy upon yourselves, and you will not ; ministers see the poisoned cup in the drunkard’s hand, and tell him, There is poison in it, and desire him to have mercy on his soul, and forbear, and he will not hear us ; drink it he must, and will ; he loves it, and, therefore, though hell comes next, he saith,

he cannot help it. What should one say to such men as these? We tell the ungodly, careless worldlings, It is not such a life that will serve the turn, or ever bring you to heaven. If a bear were at your back, you would mend your pace; and when the curse of God is at your back, and Satan and hell are at your back, you will not stir, but ask, What needs all this ado? Is an immortal soul of no more worth? O have mercy upon yourselves! But they will have no mercy on themselves, nor once regard us. We tell them the end will be bitter. Who can dwell with the everlasting fire? And yet they will have no mercy upon themselves. And yet will these shameful wretches say, that God is more merciful than to condemn them? when it is themselves that cruelly and unmercifully run upon condemnation. And if we should go to them with our hats in our hands, and entreat them, we cannot stop them; if we should fall down on our knees to them, we cannot stop them; but to hell they will, and yet will not believe that they are going thither. If we beg of them, for the sake of God that made them, and preserveth them; for the sake of Christ that died for them; for the sake of their own poor souls; to pity themselves, and go no farther in the way to hell, but come to Christ while his arms are open, and enter into the state of life while the door stands open, and now take mercy while mercy may be had, they will not be persuaded. If we should die for it, we cannot get them so much as now and then to consider with themselves of the matter, and to turn. And yet they can say, I hope God will be merciful. Did you never consider what he saith, Isa. xxvii. 11, "It is a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour." If another man will not clothe you when you are naked, and feed you when you are hungry, you will say he is unmerciful. If he should cast you into prison, or beat or torment you, you would say he is unmerciful. And yet you do a thousand times more against yourselves, even cast away both soul and body for ever, and never complain of your own unmercifulness. Yea, and God

that waited upon you all the while with his mercy, must be taken to be unmerciful, if he punish you after all this. Unless the holy God of heaven will give these wretches leave to trample upon his Son's blood, and with the Jews, as it were, again to spit in his face, and do despite to the Spirit of grace, and make a jest of sin, and a mock at holiness, and set more light by saving mercy, than by the filth of their fleshly pleasure; and unless, after all this, he will save them by the mercy which they cast away and would none of, God himself must be called unmerciful by them: but he will be justified when he judgeth; and he will not stand or fall at the bar of a sinful worm.

I know there are many particular cavils that are brought by them against the Lord, but I shall not here stay to answer them particularly, having done it already in my "Treatise of Judgment," to which I shall refer them. Had the disputing part of the world been as careful to avoid sin and destruction, as they have been busy in searching after the cause of them, and forward indirectly to impute it to God, they might have exercised their wits more profitably, and have less wronged God, and sped better themselves. When so ugly a monster as sin is within us, and so heavy a thing as punishment is on us, and so dreadful a thing as hell is before us, one would think it should be an easy question who is in the fault, and whether God or man be the principal or culpable cause? Some men are such favourable judges of themselves, that they are proner to accuse the Infinite Perfection and Goodness itself, than their own hearts; and imitate their first parents that said, "The serpent tempted me, and the woman that thou gavest me, gave unto me, and I did eat," secretly implying that God was the cause. So say they, The understanding that thou gavest me was unable to discern; the will that thou gavest me was unable to make a better choice; the objects which thou didst set before me did entice me; the temptation which thou didst permit to assault me prevailed against me. And some are so loth to think that God can make a self-determining creature, that they dare not deny him that which they take to

be his prerogative, to be the determiner of the will in every sin, as the first efficient, immediate, physical cause. And many could be content to acquit God from so much causing of evil, if they could but reconcile it with his being the chief cause of good. As if truths would be no longer truths, than we are able to see them in their perfect order and coherence; because our ravelled wits cannot set them right together, nor assign each truth its proper place, we presume to conclude, that some must be cast away. This is the fruit of proud self-conceitedness, when men receive not God's truth as a child his lesson, in a holy submission to the holy omniscience of our Teacher, but as censors that are too wise to learn.

Object. But we cannot convert ourselves till God convert us; we can do nothing without his grace. It is not in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth, but in God that sheweth mercy.

Answ. 1. God hath two degrees of mercy to shew: the mercy of conversion first, and the mercy of salvation last. The latter he will give to none but those that will and run, and hath promised it to them only. The former is to make them willing that were unwilling; and though your own willingness and endeavours deserve not his grace, yet your wilful refusal deserveth that it should be denied unto you. Your disability is your very unwillingness itself, which excuseth not your sin, but maketh it the greater. You could turn, if you were but truly willing; and if your wills themselves are so corrupted, that nothing but effectual grace will move them, you have the more cause to seek for that grace, and yield to it, and do what you can in the use of the means, and not neglect it, nor set against it. Do what you are able first, and then complain of God for denying you grace, if you have cause.

Object. But you seem to intimate, all this while, that man hath free-will.

Answ. The dispute about free-will is beyond your capacity; I shall, therefore, now trouble you with no more but this about it. Your will is naturally a free, that is, a self-

determining faculty ; but it is viciously inclined, and backward to do good ; and therefore, we see by sad experience that it hath not a virtuous, moral freedom. But that is the wickedness of it which deserveth the punishment. And I pray you let us not befool ourselves with opinions. Let the case be your own. If you had an enemy so malicious, that he falls upon you and beats you every time he meets you, and takes away the lives of your children, will you excuse him, because he saith, I have not free-will, it is my nature, I cannot choose, unless God give me grace? If you have a servant that robbeth you, will you take such an answer from him? Might not every thief and murderer that is hanged at the assize, give such an answer, I have not free-will, I cannot change my own heart. What can I do without God's grace? And shall they, therefore, be acquitted? If not, why, then, should you think to be acquitted for a course of sin against the Lord?

2. From hence also you may observe these three things together. (1.) What a subtle tempter Satan is. (2.) What a deceitful thing sin is. (3.) What a foolish creature corrupted man is. A subtle tempter, indeed, that can persuade the greatest part of the world to go wilfully into everlasting fire, when they have so many warnings and dissuasives as they have! A deceitful thing is sin, indeed, that can bewitch so many thousands to part with everlasting life, for a thing so base and utterly unworthy! A foolish creature is man, indeed, that will be so cheated of his salvation for nothing; yea, for a known nothing! and that by an enemy, and a known enemy! You would think it impossible that any man in his wits should be persuaded for a trifle, to cast himself into the fire or water, into a coal-pit, to the destruction of his life; and yet men will be enticed to cast themselves into hell. If your natural lives were in your own hands, that you should not die till you would kill yourselves, how long would most of you live! And yet, when your everlasting life is so far in your own hands, under God, that you cannot be undone till you undo your-

selves, how few of you will forbear your own undoing! Ah, what a silly thing is man! and what a bewitching and befooling thing is sin!

3. From hence also you may learn, that it is no great wonder, if wicked men be hinderers of others in the way to heaven, and would have as many unconverted as they can, and would draw them into sin, and keep them in it. Can you expect that they should have mercy on others, that have none upon themselves? and that they should much stick at the destruction of others, that stick not to destroy themselves? They do no worse by others, than they do by themselves.

4. Lastly, You may hence learn that the greatest enemy to man is himself, and the greatest judgment in this life, that can befall him, is to be left to himself; and that the great work that grace hath to do, is to save us from ourselves, and the greatest accusations and complaints of men should be against themselves; and that the greatest work we have to do ourselves, is to resist ourselves; and the greatest enemy we should daily pray, and watch, and strive against, is our carnal hearts and wills; and the greatest part of your work, if you would do good to others, and help them to heaven, is to save them from themselves, even from their own blind understandings, and corrupted wills, and perverse affections, and violent passions, and unruly senses. I only name all these for brevity sake, and leave them to your further consideration.

Well, sirs, now we have found out the great delinquent and murderer of souls (even men's selves, their own wills); what remains, but that you judge according to the evidence, and confess this great iniquity before the Lord, and be humbled for it, and do so no more? To these three ends distinctly, I shall add a few words more. 1. Further to convince you. 2. To humble you. And, 3. To reform you, if there be yet any hopes.

1. We know so much of the exceeding gracious nature of God, who is willing to do good, and delighteth to shew mercy, that we have no reason to suspect him of being the

culpable cause of our death, or call him cruel. He made all good, and he preserveth and maintaineth all. "The eyes of all things do wait upon him, and he giveth them their meat in due season; he openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desires of all the living," Psal. cxlv. 15, 16. He is not only "righteous in all his ways" (and, therefore, will deal justly), "and holy in all his works" (and, therefore, not the author of sin), but "he is also good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works," Psalm cxlv. 17, 9.

But as for man, we know his mind is dark, his will perverse, his affections carry him so headlong, that he is fitted by folly and corruption to such a work as the destroying of himself. If you saw a lamb lie killed in the way, would you sooner suspect the sheep, or the dog or wolf to be the author of it, if they both stand by; or if you see a house broken, and the people murdered, would you sooner suspect the prince, or judge, that is wise and just, and had no need; or a known thief, or murderer? I say, therefore, as James i. 13-15, "Let no man say when he is tempted that he is tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" (to draw him to sin); "but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." You see here, that sin is the brat of your own concupiscence, and not to be fathered on God; and that death is the offspring of your own sin, and the fruit which it will yield you as soon as it is ripe. You have a treasure of evil in yourselves, as a spider hath of poison, from whence you are bringing forth hurt to yourselves; and spinning such webs as entangle your own souls. Your nature shews it is you that are the cause.

2. It is evident, you are your own destroyers, in that you are so ready to entertain any temptation almost that is offered you. Satan is scarce readier to move you to any evil, than you are ready to hear, and to do as he would have you. If he would tempt your understanding to error

and prejudice, you yield. If he would hinder you from good resolutions, it is soon done. If he would cool any good desires or affections, it is soon done. If he would kindle any lust, or vile affections and desires, in you, it is soon done. If he would put you on to evil thoughts, words, or deeds, you are so free, that he needs no rod or spur. If he would keep you from holy thoughts, and words, and ways, a little doth it; you need no curb. You examine not his suggestions, nor resist them with any resolution, nor cast them out as he casts them in, nor quench the sparks which he endeavoureth to kindle. But you set in with him and meet him half-way, and embrace his motions, and tempt him to tempt you. And it is easy to catch such greedy fish that are ranging for a bait, and will take the bare hook.

3. Your destruction is evidently your own doing, in that you resist all that would help to save you, and would do you good, or hinder you from undoing yourselves. God would help and save you by his word, and you resist it, it is too strict for you. He would sanctify you by his Spirit, and you resist and quench it. If any man reprove you for your sin, you fly in his face with evil words: and if he would draw you to a holy life, and tell you of your present danger, you give him little thanks, but either bid him look to himself, he shall not answer for you; or else at best, you put him off with a heartless thanks, and will not turn when you are persuaded. If ministers would privately instruct and help you, you will not come at them, your unhumbled souls do feel but little need of their help. If they would catechise you, you are too old to be catechised, though you are not too old to be ignorant and unholy. Whatever they can say to you for your good, you are so self-conceited and wise in your own eyes (even in the depth of ignorance), that you will regard nothing that agreeth not with your present conceits, but contradict your teachers, as if you were wiser than they; you resist all that they can say to you, by your ignorance and wilfulness, and foolish cavils, and shifting evasions, and unthankful rejections; so that no good that is

offered, can find any welcome acceptance or entertainment with you.

4. Moreover, it is apparent that you are self-destroyers, in that you draw the matter of your sin and destruction, even from the blessed God himself. You like not the contrivance of his wisdom. You like not his justice, but take it for cruelty. You like not his holiness, but are ready to think he is such a one as yourselves, Psal. l. 21, and makes as light of sin as you. You like not his truth, but would have his threatenings, even his peremptory threatenings, prove false. And his goodness, which you seem most highly to approve, you partly abuse to the strengthening of your sin, as if you might the freelier sin, because God is merciful, and because his grace doth so much abound.

5. Yea, you fetch destruction from your blessed Redeemer, and death from the Lord of life himself. And nothing more emboldeneth you in sin, than that Christ hath died for you; as if now the danger of death were over, and you might boldly venture. As if Christ were become a servant to Satan and your sins, and must wait upon you while you are abusing him; and because he is become the Physician of souls, and is able to save to the utmost all that come to God by him, you think he must suffer you to refuse his help, and throw away his medicines, and must save you, whether you will come to God by him or no: so that a great part of your sins are occasioned by your bold presumption upon the death of Christ.

Not considering that he came to redeem his people from their sin, and to sanctify them a peculiar people to himself, and to conform them in holiness to the image of their heavenly Father, and to their Head, Matt. i. 21; Tit. ii. 14; 1 Pet. i. 15, 16; Col. iii. 10, 11; Phil. iii. 9, 10.

6. You also fetch your own destruction from all the providences and works of God. When you think of his eternal foreknowledge and decrees, it is to harden you in your sin, or possess your minds with quarrelling thoughts, as if his decrees might spare you the labour of repentance and a holy life, or else were the cause of your sin and death. If

he afflict you, you repine ; if he prosper you, you the more forget him, and are the more backward to the thoughts of the life to come. If the wicked prosper, you forget the end that will set all reckonings straight ; and are ready to think, it is as good to be wicked as godly. And thus you draw your death from all.

7. And the like you do from all the creatures, and mercies of God to you ; he giveth them to you as the tokens of his love, and furniture for his service, and you turn them against him to the pleasing of your flesh. You eat and drink to please your appetite, and not for the glory of God, and to enable you for his work. Your clothes you abuse to pride. Your riches draw your hearts from heaven, Phil. iii.

18. Your honours and applause do puff you up ; if you have health and strength, it makes you more secure, and forget your end. Yea, other men's mercies are abused by you to your hurt. If you see their honours and dignity, you are provoked to envy them. If you see their riches, you are ready to covet them. If you look upon beauty, you are stirred up to lust. And it is well if godliness be not an eyesore to you.

8. The very gifts that God bestoweth on you, and the ordinances of grace which he hath instituted for his church, you turn unto your sin. If you have better parts than others, you grow proud and self-conceited. If you have but common gifts, you take them for special grace. You take the bare hearing of your duty for so good a work, as if it would excuse you for not obeying it. Your prayers are turned into sin, because you " regard iniquity in your hearts," Psal. lxvi. 18. And you " depart not from iniquity when you call on the name of the Lord," 2 Tim. ii. 19. Your " prayers are abominable, because you turn away your ear from hearing the law," Prov. xxviii. 9. And you are more ready to " offer the sacrifice of fools," (thinking you do God some special service), " than to hear his word, and obey it," Eccl. v. 1. You examine not yourselves before you receive the supper of the Lord, but, not discerning the Lord's body, do eat and drink judgment to yourselves, 1 Cor. xi. 28, 29.

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9. Yea, the persons you converse with, and all their actions, you make the occasions of your sin and destruction. If they live in the fear of God, you hate them. If they live ungodly, you imitate them. If the wicked are many, you think you may the more boldly follow them. If the godly be few, you are the more emboldened to despise them; if they walk exactly, you think they are too precise; if one of them fall into a particular temptation, you stumble upon them, and turn away from holiness, because others are imperfectly holy; as if you were warranted to break your necks because some others have, by their heedlessness, sprained a sinew or put out a bone. If a hypocrite discover himself, you say, They are all alike; and think yourselves as honest as the best. A professor can scarce slip into any miscarriage, but because he cuts his finger you think you may boldly cut your throats. If ministers deal plainly with you, you say they rail; if they speak gently or coldly, you either sleep under them, or are little more affected than the seats you sit upon. If any errors creep into the church, some greedily entertain them, and others reproach the Christian doctrine for them, which is most against them. And if we would draw you from any ancient, rooted error, which can but plead too, or three, or six, or seven hundred years' custom, you are as much offended with a motion for reformation, as if you were to lose your life by it, and hold fast old errors while you cry out against new ones. Scarce a difference can arise among the ministers of the gospel, but you will fetch your own death from it. And you will not hear, or at least not obey, the unquestionable doctrine of any of those that jump not with your conceits: one will not hear a minister, because he readeth his sermons; and another will not hear him, because he doth not read them. One will not hear him because he saith the Lord's prayer; and another will not hear him, because he doth not use it. One will not hear them that are for episcopacy, and another will not hear them that are against it. And thus I might shew you in many other cases, how you turn all that comes near you to your own destruction; so clear is it, that the un-

godly are self-destroyers, and that their perdition is of themselves.

Methinks, now, upon the consideration of what is said, and the review of your own ways, you should bethink you what you have done, and be ashamed, and deeply humbled, to remember it. If you be not, I pray you consider these following truths.

1. To be your own destroyers, is to sin against the deepest principle in your natures, even the principle of self-preservation. Every thing naturally desireth or inclineth to its own felicity, welfare, or perfection. And will you set yourselves to your own destruction? When you are commanded to love your neighbours as yourselves, it is supposed that you naturally love yourselves; but if you love your neighbours no better than yourselves, it seems you would have all the world to be damned.

2. How extremely do you cross your own intentions! I know you intend not your own damnation, even when you are procuring it; you think you are but doing good to yourselves, by gratifying the desires of your flesh. But, alas! it is but as a draught of cold water in a burning fever, or as the scratching of an itching wildfire, which increaseth the disease and pain. If indeed you would have pleasure, profit, or honour, seek them where they are to be found, and do not hunt after them in the way to hell.

3. What pity is it that you should do that against yourselves which none else in earth or hell can do! If all the world were combined against you, or all the devils in hell were combined against you, they could not destroy you without yourselves, nor make you sin but by your own consent. And will you do that against yourselves which none else can do? You have hateful thoughts of the devil, because he is your enemy, and endeavoureth your destruction. And will you be worse than devils to yourselves? Why thus it is with you, if you had hearts to understand it; when you run into sin, and run from godliness, and refuse to turn at the call of God, you do more against your own souls than men or devils could do besides. And if you should set your-

selves, and bend your wits to do yourselves the greatest mischief, you could not devise to do a greater.

4. You are false to the trust that God hath reposed in you. He hath much intrusted you with your own salvation; and will you betray your trust? He hath set you with all diligence to keep your hearts? and is this the keeping of them? Prov. iv. 23.

5. You do even forbid all others to pity you, when you will have no pity on yourselves. If you cry to God in the day of your calamity, for mercy, mercy; what can you expect but that he should thrust you away, and say, Nay, thou wouldst not have mercy on thyself; who brought this upon thee but thine own wilfulness? And if your brethren see you everlastingly in misery, how should they pity you, that were your own destroyers, and would not be dissuaded?

6. It will everlastingly make you your own tormentors in hell, to think on it, that you brought yourselves wilfully to that misery. Oh, what a griping thought it will be for ever, to think with yourselves, that this was your own doing! That you were warned of this day, and warned again, but it would not do; that you wilfully sinned, and turned away from God; that you had time as well as others, but you abused it; you had teachers as well as others, but you refused their instruction; you had holy examples, but you did not imitate them; you were offered Christ, grace, and glory as well as others, but you had more mind to fleshly pleasures; you had a prize in your hands, but had not a heart to lay it out, Prov. xvii. 16. Can it choose but torment you, to think of this your present folly? Oh that your eyes were opened to see what you have done in the wilful wronging of your own souls! and that you better understood those words of God, Prov. viii. 33-36, "Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me, love death."

And now I am come to the conclusion of this work. My heart is troubled to think how I shall leave you, lest after this the flesh should deceive you, and the world and the devil should keep you asleep, and I should leave you as I found you, till you awake in hell. Though, in care of your poor souls, I am afraid of this, as knowing the obstinacy of a carnal heart, yet I can say with the prophet Jeremiah, "I have not desired the woeful day, the Lord knoweth," Jer. xvii. 16. I have not, with James and John, desired that fire might come down from heaven, to consume them that refused Jesus Christ. But it is the preventing of the eternal fire that I have been all this while endeavouring: and oh that it had been a needless work! that God and conscience might have been as willing to spare me this labour, as some of you could have been! But, dear friends, I am so loth you should lie in everlasting fire, and be shut out of heaven, if it be possible to prevent it, that I shall once more ask you, What do you now resolve? Will you turn or die? I look upon you as a physician on his patient, in a dangerous disease, that saith unto him, Though you are so far gone, take but this medicine, and forbear but these few things that are so hurtful to you, and I dare warrant your life; but if you will not do this, you are a dead man. What would you think of such a man, if the physician and all the friends he hath, cannot persuade him to take one medicine to save his life, or to forbear one or two poisonous things that would kill him? This is your case. As far as you are gone in sin, do but now turn and come to Christ, and take his remedies, and your souls shall live. Cast up your deadly sins by repentance, and return not to your poisonous vomit any more, and you shall do well. But yet if it were your bodies that we had to deal with, we might partly know what to do for you. Though you would not consent, you might be held or bound, while the medicine was poured down your throats, and hurtful things might be kept from you. But about your souls it cannot be so; we cannot convert you against your wills. There is no carrying madmen to heaven in fetters. You may be condemned

against your wills, because you sinned with your wills; but you cannot be saved against your wills. The wisdom of God hath thought meet to lay men's salvation or destruction exceeding much upon the choice of their own wills: that no man shall come to heaven that choose not the way to heaven; and no man shall come to hell, but shall be forced to say, I have the thing I chose, my own will did bring me hither. Now if I could but get you to be willing, to be thoroughly and resolvedly, and habitually willing, the work were more than half done. And alas! must we lose our friends, and must they lose their God, their happiness, their souls, for want of this? O God forbid! It is a strange thing to me, that men are so inhuman and stupid in the greatest matters, that in lesser things are very civil and courteous, and good neighbours. For aught I know, I have the love of all, or almost all my neighbours, so far, that if I should send to every man in the town, or parish, or country, and request a reasonable courtesy of them, they will grant it me; and yet when I come to request of them the greatest matter in the world, for themselves, and not for me, I can have nothing of many of them but a patient hearing. I know not whether people think a man in the pulpit is in good sadness or not, and means as he speaks; for I think I have few neighbours, but if I were sitting familiarly with them, and telling them of what I have seen or done, or known in the world, they would believe me, and regard what I say; but when I tell them from the infallible word of God, what they themselves shall see and know in the world to come, they shew by their lives that they do either not believe it, or not much regard it. If I met ever any one of them on the way, and told them, yonder is a coal-pit, or there is a quicksand, or there are thieves lay in wait for you, I could persuade them to turn by. But when I tell them that Satan lieth in wait for them, and that sin is poison to them, and that hell is not a matter to be jested with, they go on as if they did not hear me. Truly, neighbours, I am in as good earnest with you in the pulpit, as I am in any familiar discourse,

and if ever you will regard me, I beseech you let it be here. I think there is never a man of you all, but if my own soul lay at your wills, you would be willing to save it (though I cannot promise that you would leave your sins for it.) Tell me, thou drunkard, art thou so cruel to me that speaks to thee, that thou wouldst not forbear a few cups of drink, if thou knewest it would save my soul from hell? Hadst thou rather I did burn there for ever, than thou shouldst live soberly as other men do? If so, may I not say, thou art an unmerciful monster, and not a man? If I came hungry or naked to one of your doors, would you not part with more than a cup of drink to relieve me? I am confident you would; if it were to save my life, I know you would (some of you) hazard your own. And yet will you not be entreated to part with your sensual pleasures for your own salvation? Wouldst thou forbear a hundred cups of drink, man, to save my life, if it were in thy power, and wilt thou not do it to save thy own soul? I profess to you, sirs, I am as hearty a beggar with you this day, for the saving of your souls, as I would be for my own supply, if I were forced to come a begging to your doors. And, therefore, if you would hear me then, hear me now. If you would pity me then, be entreated now to pity yourselves. I do again beseech you, as if it were on my bended knees, that you would hearken to your Redeemer, and turn, that you may live. All you that have lived in ignorance, and carelessness, and presumption, to this day; and all you that have been drowned in the cares of the world and have no mind of God and eternal glory; all you that are enslaved to your fleshly desires of meats and drinks, sports and lust; and all you that know not the necessity of holiness, and never were acquainted with the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost upon your souls; that never embraced your blessed Redeemer by a lively faith, and with admiring and thankful apprehensions of his love, and that never felt a higher estimation of God and heaven, and a heartier love to them, than to your fleshly prosperity, and the things below; I earnestly beseech you, not only for my sake, but for the Lord's

sake, and for your soul's sake, that you go not on one day longer in your former condition, but look about you and cry to God for converting grace, that you may be made new creatures, and may escape the plagues that are a little before you. And if ever you will do any thing for me, grant me this request, to turn from your evil ways and live: deny me any thing that ever I shall ask you for myself, if you will but grant me this. And if you deny me this, I care not for any thing else that you would grant me. Nay, as ever you will do any thing at the request of the Lord that made you and redeemed you, deny him not this; for if you deny him this, he cares for nothing that you shall grant him. As ever you would have him hear your prayers, and grant your requests, and do for you at the hour of death and day of judgment, or in any of your extremities, deny not his request now in the day of your prosperity. O sirs, believe it, death and judgment, and heaven and hell, are other matters when you come near them, than they seem to carnal eyes afar off. Then you will hear such a message as I bring you, with more awakened, regretful hearts.

Well, though I cannot hope so well of all, I will hope that some of you are by this time purposing to turn and live; and that you are ready to ask me, as the Jews did Peter, Acts ii. 37, when they were pricked to their hearts, and said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" How might we come to be truly converted? We are willing, if we did but know our duty. God forbid that we should choose destruction by refusing conversion, as hitherto we have done.

If these be the thoughts and purposes of your hearts, I say of you, as God did of a promising people, Deut. v. 28, 29, "They have well said, all that they have spoken: oh that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always!" Your purposes are good; oh that there were but a heart in you to perform these purposes! And in hope thereof, I shall gladly give you direction what to do, and that but briefly, that you may the easier remember it for your practice.

Direct. 1. If you would be converted and saved, labour to understand the necessity and true nature of conversion ; for what, and from what, and to what, and by what it is that you must turn.

Consider what a lamentable condition you are in till the hour of your conversion, that you may see it is not a state to be rested in. You are under the guilt of all the sins that ever you committed, and under the wrath of God, and the curse of his law ; you are bond-slaves to the devil, and daily employed in his work against the Lord, yourselves, and others. You are spiritually dead and deformed, as being void of the holy life, and nature and image of the Lord. You are unfit for any holy work, and do nothing that is truly pleasing unto God. You are without any promise or assurance of his protection ; and live in continual danger of his justice, not knowing what hour you may be snatched away to hell, and most certain to be damned if you die in that condition. And nothing short of conversion can prevent it. Whatever civilities, or amendments, or virtues, are short of true conversion, will never procure the saving of your souls. Keep the true sense of this natural misery, and so of the necessity of conversion, on your hearts.

And then you must understand what it is to be converted ; it is to have a new heart or disposition, and a new conversation.

Quest. 1. For what must we turn ?

Ans. For these ends following, which you may attain.

1. You shall immediately be made living members of Christ, and have interest in him, and be renewed after the image of God, and be adorned with all his graces, and quickened with a new and heavenly life, and saved from the tyranny of Satan and the dominion of sin, and be justified from the curse of the law, and have the pardon of all the sins of your whole lives, and be accepted of God, and made his sons, and have liberty with boldness to call him Father, and go to him by prayer in all your needs, with a promise of acceptance ; you shall have the Holy Ghost to dwell in you, to sanctify and guide you. You shall have part in the

brotherhood, communion, and prayers of the saints. You shall be fitted for God's service, and be freed from the dominion of sin, and be useful and a blessing to the place where you live, and shall have the promise of this life and that which is to come. You shall want nothing that is truly good for you, and your necessary afflictions you will be enabled to bear. You may have some taste of the communion of God in the Spirit; especially in all holy ordinances, where God prepareth a feast for your souls. You shall be heirs of heaven while you live on earth, and may foresee, by faith, the everlasting glory, and so may live and die in peace; and you shall never be so low, but your peace and happiness will be incomparably greater than your misery.

How precious is every one of these blessings, which I do but briefly name, and which in this life you may receive.

And then, 2. At death your souls shall go to Christ, and at the day of judgment both soul and body shall be justified and glorified, and enter into your Master's joy; where your happiness will consist in these particulars.

(1.) You shall be perfected yourselves: your mortal bodies shall be made immortal, and the corruptible shall put on incorruption; you shall no more be hungry, thirsty, weary, or sick; nor shall you need to fear either shame, sorrow, death, or hell. Your souls shall be perfectly freed from sin, and perfectly fitted for the knowledge, love, and praises of the Lord.

(2.) Your employment shall be to behold your glorified Redeemer, with all your holy fellow-citizens of heaven; and to see the glory of the most blessed God, and to love him perfectly, and be loved by him, and to praise him everlastingly.

(3.) Your glory will contribute to the glory of the new Jerusalem, the city of the living God, which is more than to have a private felicity to yourselves.

(4.) Your glory will contribute to the glorifying of your Redeemer, who will everlastingly be magnified and pleased

in you, that are the travail of his soul. And this is more than the glorifying of yourselves.

(5.) And the Eternal Majesty, the living God, will be glorified in your glory, both as he is magnified by your praises, and as he communicateth of his glory and goodness to you, and as he is pleased in you; and in the accomplishment of his glorious works, in the glory of the New Jerusalem, and of his Son.

All this the poorest beggar of you that is converted, shall certainly and endlessly enjoy.

2. You see for what you must turn; next you must understand from what you must turn. And that is, in a word, from your carnal self, which is the end of all the unconverted. From the flesh, that would be pleased before God, and would still be enticing you thereto. From the world, that is the bait; and from the devil, that is the angler for souls, and the deceiver. And so from all known and wilful sins.

3. Next you must know to what you must turn. And that is, to God as your end; to Christ, as the way to the Father; to holiness, as the way appointed you by Christ; and so, to the use of all the helps and means of grace offered you by the Lord.

4. Lastly, you must know by what you must turn. And that is, by Christ, as the only Redeemer and Intercessor; and by the Holy Ghost, as the Sanctifier; and by the word, as his instrument or means; and by faith and repentance as the means and duties on your part to be performed. All this is of necessity.

Direct. 2. If you would be converted and saved, be much in secret, serious consideration. Inconsiderateness undoes the world. Withdraw yourselves off into retired secrecy, and there bethink you of the end why you were made, of the life you have lived, the time you have lost, the sins you have committed; of the love, and sufferings, and fulness of Christ; of the danger you are in; of the nearness of death and judgment; and of the certainty and excellency of the joys of heaven; and of the certainty and terror of the tor-

ments of hell, and the eternity of both; and of the necessity of conversion and a holy life: steep your hearts in such considerations as these.

Direct. 3. If you will be converted and saved, attend upon the word of God, which is the ordinary means. Read the Scripture, or hear it read, and other holy writings that do apply it; constantly attend upon the public preaching of the word. As God will lighten the world by the sun, and not by himself alone, without it; so will he convert and save men by his ministers, who are the lights of the world, Acts xxvi. 17, 18; Matt. v. 14. When he hath miraculously humbled Paul, he sendeth him to Ananias, Acts ix. 10. And when he hath sent an angel to Cornelius, it is but to bid him send for Peter, who must tell him what he is to believe and do.

Direct. 4. Betake yourselves to God, in a course of earnest, constant prayer. Confess and lament your former lives, and beg his grace to illuminate and convert you. Beseech him to pardon what is past, and give you his Spirit, and change your hearts and lives, and lead you in his ways, and save you from temptation. And ply this work daily, and be not weary of it.

Direct. 5. Presently give over your known and wilful sins, make a stand, and go that way no further. Be drunk no more, but avoid the places and occasion of it. Cast away your lusts and sinful pleasures with detestation. Curse, and swear, and rail no more; and if you have wronged any, restore as Zaccheus did. If you will commit again your old sins, what blessing can you expect on the means of conversion?

Direct. 6. Presently, if possible, change your company, if it hath hitherto been bad; not by forsaking your necessary relations, but your unnecessary, sinful companions; and join yourselves with those that fear the Lord, and inquire of them the way to heaven, Acts ix. 19, 26; Psal. xv. 4.

Direct. 7. Deliver up yourselves to the Lord Jesus, as the Physician of your souls, that he may pardon you by his

blood, and sanctify you by his Spirit, by his word and ministers, the instruments of his Spirit. "He is the way, the truth, and the life: there is no coming to the Father but by him," John xiv. 6; "nor is there any other name under heaven by which you can be saved," Acts iv. 12. Study therefore his person, and nature, and what he hath done and suffered for you, and what he is to you, and what he will be, and how he is fitted to the full supply of all your necessities.

Direct. 8. If you mean indeed to turn and live, do it speedily without delay. If you be not willing to turn to-day, you will not be willing to do it at all. Remember you are all this while in your blood; under the guilt of many thousand sins, and under God's wrath, and you stand at the very brink of hell; there is but a step between you and death. And this is not a case for a man that is well in his wits to be quiet in. Up therefore presently, and fly as for your lives; as you would be gone out of your house if it were all on fire over your heads. Oh if you did but know what continual danger you live in, and what daily unspeakable loss you sustain, and what a safer and sweeter life you might live, you would not stand trifling, but presently turn. Multitudes miscarry that wilfully delay when they are convinced that it must be done. Your lives are short and uncertain; and what a case are you in, if you die before you thoroughly turn! You have staid too long already; and wronged God too long; sin getteth strength and rooting; while you delay, your conversion will grow more hard and doubtful. You have much to do, and therefore put not all off to the last, lest God forsake you, and give you up to yourselves, and then you are undone for ever.

Direct. 9. If you will turn and live, do it unreservedly, absolutely, and universally. Think not to capitulate with Christ, and divide your heart between him and the world, and to part with some sins and keep the rest; and to let go that which your flesh can spare. This is but self-deluding: you must in heart and resolution forsake all that you have, or else you cannot be his disciples, Luke xiv. 26, 33. If

you will not take God and heaven for your portion, and lay all below at the feet of Christ, but you must needs also have your good things here, and have an earthly portion, and God and glory is not enough for you ; it is in vain to dream of salvation on these terms ; for it will not be. If you seem never so religious, if yet it be but a carnal righteousness, and the flesh's prosperity, or pleasure, or safety, be still excepted in your devotedness to God ; this is as certain a way to death as open profaneness, though it be more plausible.

Direct. 10. If you will turn and live, do it resolvedly, and not stand still deliberating, as if it were a doubtful case. Stand not wavering, as if you were yet uncertain whether God or the flesh be the better master ; whether heaven or hell be the better end ; or whether sin or holiness be the better way : but away with your former lusts, and presently, habitually, and fixedly resolve : be not one day of one mind, and the next of another ; but be at a point with all the world, and resolvedly give up yourselves, and all you have, to God. Now, while you are reading or hearing this, resolve. Before you sleep another night, resolve. Before you stir from the place, resolve. Before Satan hath time to take you off, resolve. You will never turn indeed till you do resolve ; and that with a firm, unchangeable resolution. So much for the directions.

And now I have done my part in this work, that you may turn at the call of God and live. What will become of it, I cannot tell. I have cast the seed at God's command ; but it is not in my power to give the increase. I can go no further with my message, I cannot bring it to your hearts, nor make it work : I cannot do your parts for you to entertain it, and consider of it ; nor can I do God's part, by opening your heart, to cause you to entertain it ; nor can I shew you heaven or hell to your eyesight, nor give you new and tender hearts. If I knew what more to do for your conversion, I hope I should do it.

But, O thou that art the gracious Father of spirits, that hast sworn thou delightest not in the death of the wicked.

but rather that they turn and live; deny not thy blessing to these persuasions and directions, and suffer not thine enemies to triumph in thy sight; and the great deceiver of souls to prevail over thy Son, thy Spirit, and thy word. O pity poor unconverted sinners, that have no hearts to pity or help themselves: command the blind to see, and the deaf to hear, and the dead to live, and let not sin and death be able to resist thee. Awaken the secure; resolve the unresolved; confirm the wavering: and let the eyes of sinners, that read these lines, be next employed in weeping over their sins; and bring them to themselves, and to thy Son, before their sins have brought them to perdition. If thou say but the word, these poor endeavours shall prosper, to the winning of many a soul to their everlasting joy, and thine everlasting glory. Amen.

FORMS OF PRAYER.

Five Prayers : one for Families : one for a Penitent Sinner : one for the Lord's Day : one for Children and Servants : one in the method of the Lord's Prayer, being an Exposition of it : for the use of those only who need such helps.

Two reasons moved me to annex these prayers : 1. I observe that abundance of people, who have some good desires, do forbear, through disability, to worship God in their families, who I hope would do it, if they had some helps. And though there be many such extant, yet few of these poor families have the books, and I can give them my own at a little cheaper rate than I can buy others to give them.

2. Some that seem to have been brought to true repentance and newness of life, by God's blessing, on the reading of my books, have earnestly entreated me to write them a form of prayer for their families, because long disuse hath left them unable to pray before others.

For the service of God, and the good of men, I am contented to bear the censures of those who account all forms of book-prayers to be sin ; for in an age when pride (the father) and ignorance (the mother) hath bred superstition (the daughter), and taught men to think that God as fondly valueth their several modes of speaking to him as they do themselves, and thinketh as contemptuously of the contrary as they, the question whether form or no form, book or no book, hath been resolved unto such tragical and direful effects, that I were too tender, if a censure should discourage me.

A Prayer for Families, Morning and Evening.

Almighty, all-seeing, and most gracious God, the world and all therein is made, maintained, and ordered by thee : thou art everywhere present, being more than the soul of all the world. Though thou art revealed in thy glory to those only that are in heaven, thy grace is still at work on earth to prepare men for that glory : thou madest us not as the beasts that perish, but with reasonable, immortal souls, to know, and seek, and serve thee here, and then to live with all the blessed in the everlasting sight of thy heavenly glory, and the pleasures of thy perfect love and praise. But we are ashamed to think how foolishly and sinfully we have forgotten and neglected our God and our souls, and our hopes of a blessed immortality, and have overmuch minded the things of this visible, transitory world, and the prosperity and pleasure of this corruptible flesh, which we know must turn to rottenness and dust. Thou gavest us a law which was just and good, to guide us in the only way to life ; and when by sin we had undone ourselves, thou gavest us a Saviour, even thy Eternal Word made man, who by his holy life and bitter sufferings reconciled us to thee, and both purchased salvation for us, and revealed it to us, better than an angel from heaven could have done, if thou hadst sent him to us sinners on such a message : but alas, how light have we set by our Redeemer, and by all that love which thou hast manifested by him ! and how little have we studied and understood, and less obeyed, that covenant of grace which thou hast made by him to lost mankind !

But, O God, be merciful to us vile and miserable sinners ; forgive the sins of our natural pravity and the follies of our youth, and all the ignorance, negligence, omissions and commissions of our lives : and give us true repentance for them, or else we know that thou wilt not forgive them. Our life is but as a shadow that passeth away, and it is but as a moment till we must leave this world, and appear before thee to give up our account, and to speed for ever as

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here we have prepared. Should we die before thou hast turned our hearts from this sinful flesh and world to thee by true faith and repentance, we shall be lost for evermore. Oh woe to us that ever we were born, if thou forgive not our sins, and make us not holy, before this short, uncertain life be at an end! had we all the riches and pleasures of this world, they would shortly leave us in the greater sorrows. We know that all our life is but the time which thy mercy alloteth us to prepare for death; therefore we should not put off our repentance and preparation to a sick bed: but now, Lord, as if it were our last and dying words, we earnestly beg thy pardoning and sanctifying grace, through the merits and intercession of our Redeemer. O thou that hast pitied and saved so many millions of miserable sinners, pity and save us also, that we may glorify thy grace for ever: surely thou delightest not in the death of sinners, but rather that they return and live: hadst thou been unwilling to shew mercy, thou wouldst not have ransomed us by so precious a price, and still entreat us to be reconciled unto thee: we have no cause to distrust thy truth or goodness, but we are afraid lest unbelief, and pride, and hypocrisy, and a worldly, fleshly mind, should be our ruin. O save us from Satan, and this tempting world, but especially from ourselves: teach us to deny all ungodliness and fleshly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world. Let it be our chiefest daily work to please thee, and to lay up a treasure in heaven, and to make sure of a blessed life with Christ, and quietly to trust thee with soul and body. Make us faithful in our callings, and our duties to one another, and to all men, to our superiors, equals, and inferiors: bless the queen, and all in authority, that we may live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty: give wise, holy, and peaceable pastors to all the churches of Christ, and holy and peaceable minds to the people: convert the heathen and infidel nations of the world; and cause us, and all thy people, to seek first the hallowing of thy name, the coming of thy kingdom, the doing of thy will on earth as it is done in heaven: give us our daily bread, even all things necessary

to life and godliness, and let us be therewith content. Forgive us our daily sins, and let thy love and mercy constrain us to love thee above all: and for thy sake to love our neighbours as ourselves; and in all our dealings to do justly and mercifully, as we would have others do by us. Keep us from hurtful temptations, from sin, and from thy judgments, and from the malice of our spiritual and corporal enemies; and let all our thoughts, affections, passions, words, and actions, be governed by thy word and Spirit to thy glory; make all our religion and obedience pleasant to us; and let our souls be so delighted in the praises of thy kingdom, thy power, and thy glory, that it may secure and sweeten our labour by day, and our rest by night, and keep us in a longing and joyful hope of the heavenly glory: and let the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God our Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with us now and for ever. Amen.

A Confession and Prayer for a Penitent Sinner.

O most great, most wise, and gracious God, though thou hatest all the workers of iniquity, and canst not be reconciled unto sin; yet through the mediation of thy blessed Son, with pity behold this miserable sinner who casteth himself down at the footstool of thy grace. Had I lived to those high and holy ends, for which I was created and redeemed, I might now have come to thee in the boldness and confidence of a child, in assurance of thy love and favour; but I have played the fool and the rebel against thee! I have wilfully forgotten the God that made me, and the Saviour that redeemed me, and the endless glory which thou didst set before me: I forgot the business which I was sent for into the world; and have lived as if I had been made for nothing, but to pass a few days in fleshly pleasure, and pamper a carcass for the worms: I wilfully forgot what it is to be a man, who had reason given him to rule his flesh, and to know his God, and to foresee his death, and

the state of immortality : and I made my reason a servant to my senses, and lived too like the beasts that perish. Oh the precious time which I have lost, which all the world cannot call back ! Oh the calls of grace, which I have neglected ! Oh the calling of God, which I have resisted ! the wonderful love which I unthankfully rejected ! and the manifold mercies which I have abused, and turned into wantonness and sin ! How deep is the guilt which I have contracted ! and how great are the comforts which I have lost ! I might have lived all this while in the love of thee my gracious God ; and in the delight of thy holy word and ways ; in the daily sweet foresight of heaven, and in the joy of the Holy Ghost : if I would have been ruled by thy righteous laws : but I have hearkened to the flesh, and to this wicked and deceitful world, and have preferred a short and sinful life before thy love and endless glory.

Alas, what have I been doing since I came into the world ? Folly and sin have taken up my time. I am ashamed to look back upon the years that I have spent ; and to think of the temptations that I have yielded to. Alas, what trifles have enticed me from my God ! How little have I had for the holy pleasures which I have lost ! Like Esau, I have profanely sold my birthright for one morsel, to please my fancy, my appetite, and my lust ; I have set light by all the joys of heaven ; I have unkindly despised the goodness of my Maker ; I have slighted the love and grace of my Redeemer ; I have resisted thy Holy Spirit, silenced my own conscience, and grieved thy ministers and my own faithful friends, and have brought myself into this woeful case, wherein I am a shame and burden to myself, and God is my terror, who should be only my hope and joy.

Thou knowest my secret sins, which are unknown to men ; thou knowest all their aggravations. My sins, O Lord, have found me out. Fears and sorrows overwhelm me ! If I look behind me, I see my wickedness pursue my soul, and, as an army, ready to overtake me, and devour me. If I look before me, I see the just and dreadful judgment, and I know that thou wilt not acquit the guilty. If I look within

me, I see a dark defiled heart. If I look without me, I see a world still offering fresh temptations to deceive me. If I look above me, I see thine offended dreadful Majesty; and if I look beneath me, I see the place of endless torment, and the company which I deserve to suffer with. I am afraid to live, and more afraid to die.

But yet when I look to thy abundant mercy, and to thy Son, and to thy covenant, I have hope. Thy goodness is equal to thy greatness; thou art love itself, and thy mercy is over all thy works. So wonderfully hath thy Son condescended unto sinners, and done and suffered so much for their salvation, that if yet I should question thy willingness to forgive, I should but add to all my sins, by dishonouring that matchless mercy which thou dost design to glorify. Yea more, I find upon record in thy word, that through Christ thou hast made a covenant of grace, and act of oblivion, in which thou hast already conditionally but freely pardoned all; granting them forgiveness of all their sins, without any exception, whenever by unfeigned faith and repentance they turn to thee by Jesus Christ. And thy present mercy doth increase my hope, in that thou hast not cut me off, nor utterly left me to the hardness of my heart, but shewest me my sin and danger, before I am past remedy.

O, therefore, behold this prostrate sinner, which with the publican smiteth on his breast, and is ashamed to look up towards heaven: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." I confess not only my original sin, but the follies and furies of my youth, my manifold sins of ignorance and knowledge, of negligence and wilfulness, of omission and commission; against the law of nature, and against the grace and gospel of thy Son; forgive and save me, O my God, for thy abundant mercy, and for the sacrifice and merit of thy Son, and for the promise of forgiveness which thou hast made through him, for in these alone is all my trust. Condemn me not who condemn myself. O thou that hast opened so precious a fountain for sin and for uncleanness, wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin. Though thy justice might send me presently to hell, let mercy

triumph in my salvation. Thou hast no pleasure in the death of sinners, but rather that they repent and live : if my repentance be not such as thou requirest, O soften this hardened, flinty heart, and give me repentance unto life. Turn me to thyself, O God of my salvation, and cause thy face to shine upon me. " Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me." Meet not this poor, returning prodigal, in thy wrath, but with the embracement of thy tender mercies. Cast me not from thy presence, and sentence me not to depart from thee with the workers of iniquity. Thou who didst patiently endure me when I despised thee, refuse me not now I seek unto thee, and here in the dust implore thy mercy. Thou didst convert and pardon a wicked Manasseh, and a persecuting Saul. And there are multitudes in heaven, who were once thine enemies. Glorify also thy superabounding grace, in the forgiveness of my abounding sins.

I ask not for liberty to sin again, but for deliverance from the sinning nature. O give me the renewing Spirit of thy Son, which may sanctify all the powers of my soul. Let me have the new and heavenly birth and nature, and the Spirit of adoption to reform me to thine image, that I may be holy as thou art holy. Illuminate me with the saving knowledge of thyself, and thy Son Jesus Christ. O fill me with thy love, that my heart may be wholly set upon thee, and the remembrance of thee be my chief delight : let the freest and sweetest of my thoughts run after thee : and the freest and sweetest of my discourse be of thee, and of thy glory, and of thy kingdom, and of thy word and ways ! O let my treasure be laid up in heaven, and there let me daily and delightfully converse. Make it the great and daily business of my devoted soul, to please thee, and to honour thee, to promote thy kingdom, and to do thy will ! Put thy fear into my heart, that I may never depart from thee. This world hath had too much of my heart already ; let it now be crucified to me, and I to it, by the cross of Christ : let me not love it nor the things which are therein ; but having food and raiment, cause me therewith to be content.

Destroy in me all fleshly lusts, that I may not live after the flesh, but the Spirit. Keep me from the snares of wicked company, and from the counsel and ways of the ungodly. Bless me with the helpful communion of the saints, and with all the means that thou hast appointed to further our sanctification and salvation. Oh that my ways were so directed, that I might keep thy statutes ! Let me never return again to folly, nor forget the covenant of my God : help me to quench the first motion of sin, and to abhor all sinful desires and thoughts ; and let thy Spirit strengthen me against all temptations ; that I may conquer and endure to the end. Prepare me for sufferings, and for death and judgment ; that when I must leave this sinful world, I may yield up my departing soul with joy into the faithful hands of my dear Redeemer ; that I be not numbered with the ungodly, which die in their unpardoned sin, and pass into everlasting misery ; but may be found in Christ, having the righteousness which is of God by faith ; and may attain to the resurrection of the just ; that so the remembrance of the sin and miseries from which thou hast delivered me, may further my perpetual thanks and praise to thee my Creator, my Redeemer, and my Sanctifier.

And oh that thou wouldst call and convert the miserable nations of idolaters and infidels, and the multitudes of ungodly hypocrites, who have the name of Christians, and not the truth, and power, and life. O send forth labourers into thy harvest, and let not Satan hinder them. Prosper thy gospel, and the kingdom of thy Son, that sinners may more abundantly be converted to thee, and this earth may be made like unto heaven ; that when thou hast gathered us all into unity with Christ, we may all, with perfect love and joy, ascribe to thee the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

A Form of Praise and Prayer for the Lord's Day.

Glorious Jehovah, while angels and perfected spirits are praising thee in the presence of thy glory, thou hast allowed and commanded us to take our part in the presence of thy grace: we have the same most holy God to praise; and though we see thee not, our Head and Saviour seeth thee, and our faith discerneth thee in the glass of thy holy works and word. Though we are sinners, and unworthy, and cannot touch those holy things, without the marks of our pollution; yet we have a great High Priest with thee, who was separated from sinners, holy, harmless, and undefiled, who appeareth for us, in the merits of his spotless life and sacrifice, and by whose hands only we dare presume to present a sacrifice to the most holy God. And thou hast ordained this day of holy rest, as a type and means of that heavenly rest with the triumphant church to which we aspire, and for which we hope. Thou didst accept their lower praise on earth, before they celebrated thy praise in glory: accept ours also by the same Mediator.

Glory be to thee, O God, in the highest: on earth peace, good-will towards men. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who wast, and art, and art to come; eternal, without beginning or end; immense, without all bounds or measure; the infinite Spirit, Father, Word, and Holy Ghost; the infinite Life, Understanding, and Will, infinitely powerful, wise, and good; of thee, and through thee, and to thee are all things; to thee be glory for evermore. All thy works declare thy glory; for thy glorious perfections appear on all, and for thy glory, and the pleasure of thy holy will, didst thou create them. The heavens, and all the hosts thereof; the sun, and all the glorious stars; the fire, with its motion, light, and heat; the earth, and all that dwell thereon, with all its sweet and beauteous ornaments; the air, and all the meteors; the great deeps, and all that swim therein; all are the preachers of thy praise, and shew forth the great Creator's glory. How great is that power which

made so great a world of nothing ; which with wonderful swiftness moved those great and glorious luminaries, which in a moment send forth the influences of their motion, light, and heat, through all the air, to sea and earth ! Thy powerful life giveth life to all ; and preserveth this frame of nature which thou hast made. How glorious is that wisdom which ordereth all things, and assigneth to all their place and office, and by its perfect law maintaineth the beauty and harmony of all ! how glorious is that goodness and love, which made all good and very good !

We praise and glorify thee, our Lord and Owner ; for we and all things are thine own. We praise and glorify thee, our King and Ruler ; for we are thy subjects, and our perfect obedience is thy due : just are all thy laws and judgments ; true and sure is all thy word. We praise and glorify thee, our great Benefactor ; in thee we live, and move, and are ; all that we are, or have, or can do, is wholly from thee, the Cause of all ; and all is for thee, for thou art our End. Delightfully to love thee, is our greatest duty, and our only felicity ; for thou art love itself, and infinitely amiable.

When man by sin did turn away his heart from thee, believed the tempter against thy truth, obeyed his senses against thy authority and wisdom, and forsaking thy fatherly love and goodness, became an idol to himself, thou didst not use him according to his desert : when we forsook thee, thou didst not utterly forsake us ; when we had lost ourselves, and by sin became thine enemies, condemned by thy law, thy mercy pitied us, and gave us the promise of a Redeemer, who in the fulness of time did assume our nature, fulfilled thy law, and suffered for our sins, and conquering death, did rise again, ascended to heaven, and is our glorified Head and Intercessor. Him hast thou exalted to be a Prince and Saviour, to give us repentance and remission of sins. In him thou hast given pardon and justification, reconciliation and adoption, by a covenant of grace, to every penitent believer. Of enemies, and the heirs of death, thou hast made us sons and heirs of life.

We are the brands whom thou hast plucked out of the

fire; we are the captives of Satan whom thou hast redeemed; we are the condemned sinners whom thou hast pardoned: we praise thee, we glorify thee, our merciful God, and gracious Redeemer. Our souls have now refuge from thy revenging wrath. Thy promise is sure: Satan, and the world, and death are overcome; our Lord is risen; he is risen, and we shall rise through him. O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory! Our Saviour is ascended to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God; and we shall ascend; to his hands we may commit our departing souls: our Head is glorified, and it is his will and promise that we shall be with him where he is to see his glory; he hath sealed us thereunto by his Holy Spirit: we were dead in sins, and he hath quickened us; we were dark in ignorance and unbelief, and he hath enlightened us; we were unholy and carnal, sold under sin, and he hath sanctified our wills, and killed our concupiscence. We praise and glorify this Spirit of life, with the Father and the Son, from whom he is sent to be life, and light, and love to our dead, and dark, and disaffected souls. We are created, and redeemed, and sanctified for thy holy love, and praise, and service: O let these be the very nature of our souls, and the employment and pleasure of all our lives! O, perfect thy weak and languid graces in us, that our love and praise may be more perfect! We thank thee for thy word, and sacred ordinances, for the comfort of the holy assemblies and communion of the saints, and for the mercy of these thy holy days. But let not thy praise be here confined; but be our daily life, and bread, and work.

Fain we would praise thee with more holy and more joyful souls. But how can we do it with so weak a faith, and so great darkness and strangeness to thee? with so little assurance of thy favour and our salvation? Can we rightly thank thee for the grace which we are still in doubt of? Fain we would be liker to those blessed souls who praise thee without our fears and dulness. But how can it be, while we love thee so little, and have so little taste and feeling of thy love? and whilst this load of sin doth press us down, and

we are imprisoned in the remnant of our carnal affections? O kill this pride and selfishness, these lusts and passions. Destroy this unbelief and darkness, and all our sins, which are the enemies of us, and of thy praise. Make us more holy and heavenly: and O bring us nearer thee in faith and love, that we may be more suitable to the heavenly employment of thy praise.

Vouchsafe more of thy Spirit to all thy churches and servants in the world: that as their darkness and selfishness, and imperfections have defiled, and divided, and weakened them, and made them a scandal and hardening to infidels; so their knowledge, self-denial, and impartial love, may truly reform, unite, and strengthen them: that the glory of their holiness may win the unbelieving world to Christ. O let not Satan keep up still so large a kingdom of tyranny, ignorance, and wickedness in the earth, and make this world as the suburbs of hell: but let the earth be more conformable to heaven, in the glorifying of thy holy name, the advancing of thy kingdom, and the doing of thy just and holy will. Let thy way be known upon earth, and thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God, let all the people praise thee! Yea, give thy Son the heathen for his inheritance, and let his gospel enlighten the dark, forsaken nations of the earth. Let every knee bow to him, and every tongue confess that he is Christ, to their salvation and thy glory. Provide and send forth the messengers of thy grace through all the earth. Deliver all the churches from sin, division, and oppression. Let thy holy word and worship continue in these kingdoms, whilst this world endureth. Bless the queen, and all in authority, with all that wisdom, justice, and holiness, which are needful to her own and her subjects' safety, peace, and welfare. Let every congregation among us have burning and shining lights, that the ignorant and ungodly perish not for want of teaching and exhortation: and open men's hearts to receive thy word, and cause them to know the day of their visitation. Be merciful to the afflicted, in sickness, dangers, wants, or sorrows, according to thy goodness and their necessities.

Let all the prayers and praises of the faithful throughout the world, sent up this day in the name of our common Mediator, by him be presented acceptable unto thee; notwithstanding the imperfections and blemishes that are on them, and the censures, divisions, and injuries, which in their frowardness they are guilty of against each other: let them enter as one in Christ our Head, who are too sadly and stiffly distant among themselves. Prepare us all for that world of peace, where the harmony of universal love and praise shall never be interrupted by sins, or griefs, or fears, or discord; but shall be everlastingly perfect to our joy and to thy glory, through our glorified Mediator, who taught us when we pray to say, Our Father, which art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

A short Prayer for Children and Servants.

Ever-living and most gracious God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! infinite is thy power, thy wisdom and thy goodness! Thou art the Maker of all the world, the Redeemer of lost and sinful man, and the Sanctifier of the elect! Thou hast made me a living, reasonable soul, placed awhile in this flesh and world to know, and love, and serve thee, my Creator, with all my heart, and mind, and strength, that I might obtain the reward of the heavenly glory. This should have been the greatest care, and business, and pleasure of all my life: I was bound to it by thy law; I was invited by thy mercy. And in my baptism I was devoted to this holy life, by a solemn covenant and vow. But, alas, I have proved too unfaithful to that covenant; I have forgotten and neglected the God, the Saviour, and the Sanctifier, to whom I was engaged; and have too much served the devil, the

world, and flesh, which I renounced : I was born in sin, and sinfully I have lived. I have been too careless of my immortal soul, and of the great work for which I was created and redeemed ; I have spent much of my precious time in vanity, in minding and pleasing this corruptible flesh ; and I have hardened my heart against those instructions, by which thy Spirit, and my teachers, and my own conscience, did call upon me to repent and turn to thee.

And now, Lord, my convinced soul doth confess, that I have deserved to be forsaken by thee, and given over to my lust and folly, and to be cast out of thy glorious presence into damnation. But seeing thou hast given a Saviour to the world, and made a pardoning and gracious law, promising forgiveness and salvation through his merits, to every true penitent believer, I thankfully accept the mercy of thy covenant in Christ ; I humbly confess my sin and guiltiness ; I cast my miserable soul upon thy grace, and the merits and sacrifice, and intercession of my Saviour. O pardon all the sins of my corrupted heart and life ; and as a reconciled Father, take me to be thy child ; and give me thy renewing Spirit, to be in me a principle of holy life, and light, and love, and thy seal and witness that I am thine. Let him quicken my dead and hardened heart ; let him enlighten my dark, unbelieving mind by clearer knowledge and firm belief ; let him turn my will to the ready obedience of thy holy will ; let him reveal to my soul the wonders of thy love in Christ, and fill it with love to thee and my Redeemer, and to all thy holy word and works, till all my sinful, carnal love be quenched in me, and my sinful pleasures turned into a sweet delight in God : give me self-denial, humility, and lowliness, and save me from the great and hateful sins of selfishness, worldliness, and pride. O set my heart upon the heavenly glory, where I hope ere long to live with Christ and all his holy ones, in the joyful sight, and love, and praise of thee, the God of love, for ever. Deny me not any of those helps and mercies, which are needful to my sanctification and salvation. And cause me to live in a continual readiness for a safe and comfortable death. For what would it

profit me to win all the world, and lose my soul, my Saviour, and my God?

Additions for Children.

Let thy blessing be upon my parents and governors, cause them to instruct and educate me in thy fear; and cause me with thankfulness to receive their instructions, and to love, honour, and obey them in obedience to thee. Keep me from the snares of evil company, temptations, and youthful pleasures, and let me be a companion of them that fear thee. Let my daily delight be to meditate on thy law; and let me never have the mark of the ungodly, to be a lover of pleasures more than of God. Furnish my youth with those treasures of wisdom and holiness, which may be daily increased and used to thy glory.

Additions for Servants.

And as thou hast made me a servant, make me conscionable and faithful in my place and trust, and careful of my master's goods and business, as I would be if it were my own. Make me submissive and obedient to my governors: keep me from self-will and pride, from murmuring and irreverent speeches, from falsehood, slothfulness, and all deceit. That I might not be an eye-servant, pleasing my lust and fleshly appetite; but may cheerfully and willingly do my duty, as believing that thou art the revenger of all unfaithfulness; and may do my service not only as unto man, but as to the Lord, expecting from thee my chief reward.

All this I beg and hope for, on the account of the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ, concluding in the words which he hath taught us: Our Father, which art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive

them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil ; for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

A Prayer for the Morning, in the method of the Lord's Prayer, being but an Exposition of it.

Most glorious God, who art power, and wisdom, and goodness itself, the Creator of all things ; the Owner, the Ruler, and the Benefactor of the world, but especially of thy church, and chosen ones. Though by sin original and actual we were thy enemies, the slaves of Satan and our flesh, and under thy displeasure and the condemnation of thy law ; yet thy children, redeemed by Jesus Christ thy Son, and regenerated by thy Holy Spirit, have leave to call thee their reconciled Father. For by thy covenant of grace, thou hast given them thy Son to be their Head, their Teacher, and their Saviour. And in him thou hast pardoned, adopted, and sanctified them ; sealing and preparing them by thy Holy Spirit for thy celestial kingdom, and beginning in them that holy life, and light, and love, which shall be perfected with thee in everlasting glory. Oh with what wondrous love hast thou loved us, that of rebels we should be made the sons of God ! Thou hast advanced us to this dignity, that we might be devoted wholly to thee as thine own, and might delightfully obey thee, and entirely love thee with all our heart ! And so might glorify thee here and for ever.

O cause both us, and all thy churches, and all the world, to hallow thy great and holy name ! And to live to thee as our ultimate end ! that thy shining image on holy souls may glorify thy divine perfection.

And cause both us and all the earth, to cast off the tyranny of Satan and the flesh, and to acknowledge thy supreme authority, and to become the kingdoms of thee and thy Son Jesus, by a willing and absolute subjection. O

perfect thy kingdom of grace in ourselves and in the world, and hasten the kingdom of glory.

And cause us and thy churches, and all people of the earth, no more to be ruled by the lusts of the flesh, and their erroneous conceits, and by self-will, which is the idol of the wicked; but by thy perfect wisdom and holy will revealed in thy laws, make known thy word to all the world, and send them the messengers of grace and peace; and cause men to understand, believe, and obey the gospel of salvation. And that, with such holiness, unity, and love, that the earth, which is now too like to hell, may be made like unto heaven; and not only thy scattered, imperfect flock, but those also who in their carnal and ungodly minds do now refuse a holy life, and think thy words and ways too strict, may desire to imitate even the heavenly church; where thou art obeyed, and loved, and praised, with high delight, in harmony and perfection.

And because our being is the subject of our well-being, maintain us in the life which thou hast here given us, until the work of life be finished; and give us such health of mind and body, and such protection and supply of all our wants, as shall best fit us for our duty; and make us contented with our daily bread, and patient if we want it. And save us from the love of riches, honours, and pleasures of this world, and the pride, and idleness, and sensuality which they cherish; and cause us to serve thy providence by our diligent labour, and to serve thee faithfully with all that thou givest us; and let us not make provision for the flesh, to satisfy its desires and lusts.

And we beseech thee of thy mercy, through the sacrifice and propitiation of thy beloved Son, forgive us all our sins, original and actual, from our birth to this hour; our omissions of duty, and committing of what thou didst forbid; our sins of heart, and word, and deed; our sinful thoughts and affections, our sinful passions and discontents; our secret and our open sins; our sins of negligence, and ignorance, and rashness; but especially our sins against know-

ledge and conscience, which have made the deepest guilt and wounds. Spare us, O Lord, and let not our sin so find us out as to be our ruin; but let us so find it out as truly to repent and turn to thee! Especially punish us not with the loss of thy grace! Take not thy Holy Spirit from us, and deny us not his assistance and holy operations. Seal to us by that Spirit the pardon of our sins, and lift up the light of thy countenance upon us, and give us the joy of thy favour and salvation. And let thy love and mercy to us fill us not only with thankfulness to thee, but with love and mercy to our brethren and our enemies, that we may heartily forgive them that do us wrong, as through thy grace we hope to do.

And for the time to come, suffer us not to cast ourselves wilfully into temptations, but carefully to avoid them, and resolutely to resist and conquer what we cannot avoid; and O mortify those inward sins and lusts, which are our constant and most dangerous temptations. And let us not be tempted by Satan or the world, or tried by thy judgments, above the strength which thy grace shall give us. Save us from a fearless confidence in our own strength; and let us not dally with the snare, nor taste the bait, nor play with the fire of wrath. But cause us to fear and depart from evil; lest before we are aware, we be entangled and overcome, and wounded with our guilt and with thy wrath, and our end should be worse than our beginning. Especially save us from those radical sins of error and unbelief, pride, hypocrisy, hard-heartedness, sensuality, slothfulness, and the love of this present world, and the loss of our love to thee, to thy kingdom, and thy ways.

And save us from the malice of Satan and of wicked men, and from the evils which our sins would bring upon us.

And as we crave all this from thee, we humbly tender our praises with our future service to thee! Thou art the King of all the world, and more than the life of all the living! Thy kingdom is everlasting; wise, and just, and merciful, is thy government. Blessed are they that are

faithful subjects ; but who hath hardened himself against thee, and hath prospered ? The whole creation proclaimeth thy perfection. But it is heaven where the blessed see thy glory, and the glory of our Redeemer ; where the angels and saints behold thee, admire thee, adore thee, love thee, and praise thee with triumphant, joyful songs, the holy, holy, holy God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who was, and is, and is to come ; of thee, and through thee, and to thee are all things. To thee be glory for ever. Amen.

The Creed.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth : And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary, Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried ; He descended into hell ; The third day he rose again from the dead ; He ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty ; From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost ; The Holy Catholic Church ; The communion of saints ; The forgiveness of sins ; The resurrection of the body ; And the life everlasting. Amen.

The Ten Commandments.

I. I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

II. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth : thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them : for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and

fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

III. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

IV. Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day and hallowed it.

V. Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

VI. Thou shalt not kill.

VII. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

VIII. Thou shalt not steal.

IX. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

X. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

THE
LAST WORK OF A BELIEVER;
HIS PASSING PRAYER,

RECOMMENDING HIS DEPARTING SPIRIT TO CHRIST, TO BE RECEIVED BY HIM ;

*Prepared for the Funeral of Mary the widow, first of Francis Charlton, Esq., and after of
Thomas Hammer, Esq.; and partly preached at St Mary Magdalen's
Church, in Milk Street, London, and now, at the desire of her
Daughter, before her death, reprinted.*

TO THE READER.

READER,

The person whose death did occasion this discourse was one that about five years ago removed from her ancient habitation, at Appley, in Shropshire, to Kidderminster, where she lived under my pastoral care till I was come up to London; and before she had lived there a twelvemonth (for thither she removed) she died of the fever, then very common in the city. She lived among us an example of prudence, gravity, sobriety, righteousness, piety, charity, and self-denial, and was truly what I have described her to be, and much more; for I use not to flatter the living, much less the dead. And though I had personal acquaintance with her for no longer a time than I have mentioned, yet I think it worthy the mentioning, which I understand by comparing her last years with what is said of her former time, by those that were then nearest to her, and so were at her death, that whereas (as I have said) sudden passion was the sin that she was wont much to complain of, she had not contented herself with mere complainings, but so effectually resisted them, and applied God's remedies for the healing of her nature, that the success was very much observed by those about her, and the change and cure so great herein, as was a comfort to her nearest relations that had the benefit of her converse; which I mention as a thing that shews us, 1. That even the infirmities that are found in nature and temperature of body are curable, so far as they fall under the dominion of a sanctified will. 2. That

even in age, when such passions usually get ground, and infirmities of mind increase with infirmities of body, yet grace can effectually do its work. 3. That to attend God in his means, for the subduing of any corruption, is not in vain. 4. That as God hath promised growth of grace, and flourishing in old age, so in his way we may expect the fulfilling of his promise. 5. That as grace increaseth, infirmities and corruptions of the soul will vanish.

This makes me call to mind that she was once so much taken with a sermon which I preached at the funeral of a holy aged woman,* and so sensibly oft recited the text itself as much affecting her—"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day," &c. 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17; that I am persuaded both the text itself, and the example opened (and well known) to her, did her much good.

Her work is done, her enemies are conquered (except the remaining fruits of death upon a corrupting body, which the resurrection must conquer), her danger, and temptations, and troubles, and fears, are at an end. She shall no more be discomfited with evil tidings; nor no more partake with a militant church in the sorrows of her diseases or distresses. We are left within the reach of Satan's assaults and malice, and of the rage and violence which pride, and faction, and Cainish envy, and enmity to serious holiness, do ordinarily raise against Christ's followers in the world. We are left among the lying tongues of slanderous, malicious men, and dwell in a wilderness among scorpions; where the sons of Belial, like Nabal, are such that a man cannot speak to them, 1 Sam. xxv. 17. The best of them is as a brier, the most upright sharper than a thorn hedge, Mic. vii. 4. "But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns

* Good old Mrs Doughty, sometime of Shrewsbury, who had long walked with God and longed to be with him, and was among us an excellent example of holiness, blamelessness, contempt of the world, constancy, patience, humility, and (which makes it strange) a great and constant desire to die, though she was still complaining of doubtings, and weakness of assurance.

thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands ; but the man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron, and the staff of a spear, and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place," 2 Sam. xxiii. 6, 7. We are left among our weak, distempered, sinful, afflicted, lamenting friends ; the sight of whose calamities, and participation of their sufferings, maketh us feel the strokes that fall upon so great a number, that we are never like to be free from pain. But she is entered into the land of peace, where pride and faction are shut out ; where serpentine enmity, malice, and fury, never come ; where there is no Cain to envy and destroy us ; no Sodomites to rage against us, and in their blindness to assault our doors ; no Ahithophels to plot our ruin ; no Judas to betray us ; no false witnesses to accuse us ; no Tertullus to point us out as pestilent fellows, and movers of sedition among the people ; no Rehum, Shimshai, or their society, to persuade the rulers that the servants of the God of heaven are hurtful unto kings, and against their interest and honour, Ezra iv. 9, 12-14, 22 ; v. 11 ; no rabble to cry, " Away with them, it is not fit that they should live ;" no Demas that will forsake us for the love of present things ; no such contentious, censorious friends as Job's to afflict us, by adding to our affliction ; no cursed Ham to dishonour parents ; no ambitious, rebellious Absalom to molest us, or to lament ; no sinful, scandalous, or impatient friends to be our grief : and, which is more than all, no earthly, sinful inclinations in ourselves ; no passions or infirmities ; no languishings of soul ; no deadness, dulness, hard-heartedness, or weaknesses of grace ; no backwardness to God, or estrangedness from him, nor fears or doubtings of his love, nor frowns of his displeasure. None of these do enter into that serene and holy region, nor ever interrupt the joy of saints.

The great work is yet upon our hands, to fight out the good fight, to finish our course, to run with patience the remainder of the race that is before us ; and as we must look to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, as our great Exemplar, so must we look to his saints and martyrs

as our encouraging examples under him. Put the case you were now dying (and oh, how near is it, and how sure)! what would you need most, if the day were come? That is it that you need most now. Look after it speedily while you have time. Look after it seriously, if you have the hearts of men, and sin have not turned you into idiots or blocks. What a disgrace is it to mankind, to hear men commonly at death cry out, Oh! for a little more time. And, Oh! for the opportunities of grace again. And, Oh! how shall I enter upon eternity thus unprepared? as if they had never heard or known that they must die till now. Had you not a life's time to put these questions? And should you not long ago have got them satisfactorily resolved? And justly doth God give over some to that greater shame of human nature, as not to be called to their wits, even by the approach of death itself; but as they contemned everlasting life in their health, God justly leaveth them to be so sottish as to venture presumptuously with unrenewed souls upon death; and the conceit that they are of the right church, or party, or opinion, or that the priest hath absolved them, doth pass with them for the necessary preparation; and well it were for them if these would pass them currently into heaven. But, oh, what heart can now conceive how terrible it is for a new-departed soul to find itself remedilessly disappointed, and to be shut up in flames and desperation, before they would believe that they were in danger of it!

Reader, I beseech thee, as ever thou believest that thou must shortly die, retire from the crowd and noise of worldly vanity and vexation. O, bethink thee, how little a while thou must be here, and have use for honour, and favour, and wealth; and what it is for a soul to pass into heaven or hell, and to dwell among angels or devils for ever; and how men should live, and watch, and pray, that are near to such a change as this. Should I care what men call me (by tongue or pen), should I care whether I live at liberty or in prison, when I am ready to die, and have matters of infinite moment before me to take me up? Honour or dishonour,

liberty or prison, are words of no sound or signification, scarce to be heard or taken notice of, to one of us that are just passing to God, and to everlasting life. The Lord have mercy upon the distracted world! How strangely doth the devil befool them in the daylight, and make them needlessly trouble themselves about many things, when one thing is needful; and heaven is talked of (and that but heartlessly and seldom), while fleshly provision only is the prize, the pleasure, the business of their lives. Some are diverted from their serious preparation for death by the beastly avocations of lust, and gaudiness, and meats, and drinks, and childish sports; and some by the businesses of ambition and covetousness, contriving how to feather their nests, and exercise their wills over others in the world! And some that will seem to be doing the work, are diverted as dangerously as others, by contending about formalities and ceremonies, and destroying charity and peace; rending the church, and strengthening factions, and carrying on interests hypocritically under the name of religion, till the zeal that St James describeth (James iii. 13, 14, &c.), having consumed all that was like to the zeal of love and holiness in themselves, proceed to consume the servants and interest of Christ about them, and to bite and devour, till their Lord come and find them in a day that they looked not for him, smiting their fellow-servants, and eating and drinking with the drunken, and cut them asunder, and appoint them their portion with the hypocrites, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, Matt. xxiv. 49-51.

O study, and preach, and hear, and pray, and live, and use your brethren that differ from you in some opinions, as you would do if you were going to receive your doom, and as will then be most acceptable to your Lord! The guilt of sensuality, worldliness, ambition, of uncharitableness, cruelty, and injustice, of losing time, and betraying your souls by negligence, or perfidiousness, and wilful sin, will lie heavier upon a departing soul, than now, in the drunkenness of prosperity, you can think. Christ will never receive such souls in their extremity, unless upon repentance, by

faith in his blood, they are washed from this pollution. It is unspeakably terrible to die, without a confidence that Christ will receive us; and little knows the graceless world what sincerity and simplicity in holiness is necessary to the soundness of such a confidence.

Let those that know not that they must die, or know of no life hereafter, hold on their chase of a feather, till they find what they lost their lives, and souls, and labour for. But if thou be a Christian, remember what is thy work: thou wilt not need the favour of man, nor worldly wealth, to prevail with Christ to receive thy spirit. O, learn thy last work before thou art put upon the doing of it! The world of spirits, to which we are passing, doth better know than this world of fleshly darkened sinners, the great difference between the death of a heavenly believer and of an earthly sensualist. Believe it, it is a thing possible to get that apprehension of the love of Christ, that confidence of his receiving us, and such familiar, pleasant thoughts of our entertainment by him, as shall much overcome the fears of death, and make it a welcome day to us when we shall be admitted into the celestial society: and the difference between one man's death and another's, dependeth on the difference between heart and heart, life and life, preparation and unpreparedness.

If you ask me, How may so happy a preparation be made? I have told you in this following discourse, and more fully elsewhere formerly. I shall add now these directions following.

1. Follow the flattering world no further; come off from all expectation of felicity below; enjoy nothing under the sun, but only use it in order to your enjoyment of the real, sure delight; take heed of being too much pleased in the creature. Have you houses, and lands, and offices, and honours, and friends, that are very pleasing to you? Take heed, for that is the killing snare! Shut your eyes, and wink them all into nothing; and cast by your contrivances, and cares, and fears, and remember you have another work to do.

2. Live in communion with a suffering Christ: study

well the whole life and nature of his sufferings, and the reason of them, and think how desirable it is to be conformed to him. Thus, look to Jesus, that for the joy that was set before him, despised the shame, endured the cross, and the contradiction of sinners against himself. Dwell upon this example, that the image of a humbled, suffering Christ, being deeply imprinted on thy mind, may draw thy heart into a juster relish of a mortified state. Sure he is no good Christian that thinks it not better to live as Christ did (in holy poverty and sufferings in the world), than as Cræsus, or Cæsar, or any such worldling and self-pleaser lived. Die daily by following Jesus with your cross, and when you have a while suffered with him, he will make you perfect, and receive your spirits, and you shall reign with him : it wonderfully prepareth for a comfortable death to live in the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ. He is most likely to die quietly, patiently, and joyfully, that can first be poor, be neglected, be scorned, be wronged, be slandered, be imprisoned, quietly, patiently, and joyfully. If you were but at Jerusalem, you would, with some love and pleasure, go up mount Olivet, and think, Christ went this very way. You would love to see the place where he was born, the way which he went when he carried his cross, the holy grave where he was buried (where there is a temple which pilgrims use to visit, from whence they use to bring the mark as a pleasing badge of honour) ; but how more of Christ is there in our suffering for his cause and truth, and in following him in a mortified, self-denying life, than in following him in the path that he hath trodden upon earth ! His enemies saw his cross, his grave ; his mother, his person. This did not heal their sinful souls, and make them happy ; but the cross that he calleth us to bear is a life of suffering for righteousness' sake ; in which he commandeth us to rejoice, and be exceedingly glad, because our reward is great in heaven, though all manner of evil be spoken of us falsely by men on earth, Matt. v. 11, 12. This is called a being partaker of Christ's sufferings, in which we are commanded to rejoice, " that, when his glory shall be revealed, we may

be glad also with exceeding joy," 1 Pet. iv. 13. And as "the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation aboundeth by Christ," 2 Cor. i. 5. Till we come up to a life of willing mortification, and pleased, contented suffering with Christ, we are in the lower form of his school, and, as children, shall tremble at that which should not cause our terror; and, through misapprehensions of the case of a departing soul, shall be afraid of that which should be our joy. I am not such an enemy to the esteem of relics, but if one could shew me the very stocks that Paul and Silas sat in when they sung psalms in their imprisonment (Acts xvi.), I could be contented to be put (for the like cause) into the same stocks, with a special willingness and pleasure: how much more should we be willing to be conformed to our suffering Lord in a spirit and life of true mortification!

3. Hold communion also with his suffering members: desire not to dwell in the tents of wickedness, nor to be planted among them that flourish for a time, that may be destroyed for ever, Psal. xcii. 6, 7. I had rather have Bradford's heart and faggot than Bonner's bishopric. It was holy Stephen, and not those that stoned him, that saw heaven opened, and the Son of man sitting at the right hand of God (Acts vii. 56), and that could joyfully say, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." He liveth not by faith (though he may be a hanger-on that keepeth up some profession for fear of being damned) who chooseth not rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; and esteemeth not the very reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of the world, as having respect to the recompence of reward, Heb. xi. 25, 26.

4. Live as if heaven were open to your sight, and then dote upon the delights of worldlings if you can; then love a life of fleshly ease and honour, better than to be with Christ, if you can. But of this I have spoken at large in other writings.

Christian, make it the study and business of thy life to

learn to do thy last work well, that work which must be done but once ; that so death, which transmits unholy souls into utter darkness and despair, may deliver thy spirit into thy Redeemer's hands, to be received to his glory, according to that blessed promise, John xii. 26. And while I am in the flesh beg the same mercy for

Thy brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ,

RICHARD BAXTER.

London, Jan. 81, 1661.

THE LAST WORK OF A BELIEVER.

" Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."—Acts vii. 59.

THE birth of nature, and the new birth of grace, in their measure resemble the death of saints, which is the birth of glory. It is a bitter-sweet day, a day that is mixed of sorrow and joy, when nature must quit its familiar guest, and yield to any of these changes. Our natural birth is not without the throes, and pain, and groanings of the mother, though it transmit the child into a more large, and light-some, and desirable habitation. Our spiritual birth is not without its humbling and heart-piercing sorrows; and when we are brought out of darkness into the marvellous light, we leave our old companions in displeasure, whom we forsake, and our flesh repining at the loss of its sensual delights. And our passage into glory is not without those pangs and fears which must needs be the attendants of a pained body ready to be dissolved, and a soul that is going through so strait a door into a strange, though a most blessed place; and it leaveth our lamenting friends behind, that feel their loss, and would longer have enjoyed our company, and see not (though they believe) the glory of the departed soul. And this is our case that are brought hither this day, by an act of Providence sad to us, though joyous to our departed friend; by a voice that hath called her into glory, and called us into this mourning plight: even us that rejoice in the thoughts of her felicity, and are not so cruel as to wish her again into this corruptible flesh, and calamitous world, from

the glorious presence of the Lord ; and yet should have kept her longer from it, for our own and others' sakes, if our wisdom had been fit to rule, or our wills to be fulfilled, or if our prayers must have been answered, according to the measure of our failing apprehensions or precipitant desires. But folly must submit to the incomprehensible wisdom, and the desire of the creature must stoop to the will of the Creator. The interest of Christ must be preferred when he calleth for his own, and our temporary interest must give place : flesh must be silent and not contend, and dust must not dare to question God ; he knoweth best when his fruit is ripe, and though he will allow our moderate sorrows, he will not so much injure his saints as to detain them with us from their joyful rest, till we are content to let them go.

Thus also did blessed Stephen depart from glory to glory ; from a distant sight of the glory of God, and of Jesus standing at his right hand, into the immediate presence and fruition of that glory. But yet he must pass the narrow port ; enraged malice must stone him till he die ; and he must undergo the pains of martyrdom before he reach to the glory which he had seen. And when he was arrived in safety, he leaveth his brethren scattered in the storm, and devout men make great lamentation at his burial, Acts viii. 2. Though it is probable by the ordinary acceptation of the word *ἄνδρες ὑλαβίς*, that they were not professed Christians, but devout proselytes (such as Cornelius and the Æthiopian eunuch were), that buried and thus lamented Stephen, as knowing him to be an excellent person, cruelly murdered by the raging Jews ; yet their example, in a case not culpable, but commendable, may be imitated by believers, upon condition that, with our sense of the excellency of the persons, and of our loss by their removal, we exceed them that had but a darker revelation in our joyful sense of the felicity of the translated souls.

The occasion of the death of this holy man was partly that he surpassed others, as being full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost ; and partly that he plainly rebuked the blind and furious persecuting zeal of the Jews, and bore a most

resolute testimony of Christ. It is an ill time when men must suffer because they are good, and deserve not suffering, but reward; and they are an unhappy people that have no more grace or wit but to fight against heaven, and set themselves under the strokes of God's severest justice, by persecuting them that are dear to Christ, and faithfully perform their duty. It is no strange thing for the zeal and interest of a faction to make men mad; so mad as implacably to rage against the offspring of heaven, and to hate men because they are faithful to their great Master, and because they are against their faction; so mad as to think that the interest of their cause requireth them to destroy the best with the greatest malice, because they stand most in their way, and to forget that Christ, the revenger of his elect, doth take all as done to him that is done to them; so mad as to forget all the terrible threatenings of God, and terrible instances of his avenging justice against the enemies of his servants, whom he taketh as his own; and to ruin their own reputations by seeking to defame the upright, whose names God is engaged to honour, and whose righteousness shall shine forth as the sun, when foolish malignity hath done its worst. When Christ had pleaded his cause effectually with Saul, that was one of the persecutors of Stephen, he maketh him confess that he was *ὑπερβολικῶς ἡμιμαρτυρῶν*, exceedingly, excessively, or beyond measure mad against the Christians.

But this blessed protomartyr, in despite of malice, doth safely and joyfully pass through all their rage to heaven. By killing him they make him more than conqueror, and send him to receive his crown. And he shuts up all the action of his life in imitation of his suffering Lord, with a twofold request to Heaven, the one for himself, that his spirit may be received, the other for his persecutors, that this sin may not be laid to their charge, Acts vii. 59, 60; for so you may find Christ did before him, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do;" and, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," Luke xxiii. 34, 46. Only Christ directeth his prayer immediately to the Father,

and Stephen to Christ, as being one that had a mediator, when Christ had none, as needing none; and being now bearing witness, by his suffering, to Christ, and therefore it was seasonable to direct his prayer to him; but especially because it was an act of mediation that he petitioneth for, and therefore directeth his petition to the Mediator.

This first request of this dying saint, which I have chosen to handle, as suitable and seasonable for our instruction at this time, in a few words containeth not a few exceeding useful, wholesome truths.

As I. It is here plainly intimated that Jesus Christ is exalted in glory, in that he hath power to receive departed souls.

II. That Christ is to be prayed to, and that it is not our duty to direct all our prayers only to the Father. Especially those things that belong to the office of the Mediator, as interceding for us in the heavens, must be requested of the Mediator. And those things which belong to the Father to give for the sake of the Mediator, must be asked of the Father for his sake. I cannot now stay to tell you in particular what belongeth to the one, and what unto the other.

III. That man hath a spirit as well as a body; of which more anon.

IV. That this spirit dieth not with the body (unless you will call a mere separation a dying.)

V. That Christ doth receive the spirits of his saints when they are separated from the body.

VI. That a dying Christian may confidently and comfortably commend his spirit to Christ, to be received of him.

VII. That prayer in general, and this prayer in special, That Christ will receive our departing souls, is a most suitable conclusion of all the actions of a Christian's life.

The first and second of these doctrines, offered us by this text, I shall pass by.

The third is not questioned by any that knoweth himself to be a man: but that we may understand it, and the rest, we must consider what the word "spirit" doth here sig-

nify. By "spirit" here, can be meant nothing but the rational soul, which is the principal constitutive part of the man. For though the word do sometimes signify the wind or breath, and sometimes the moral and intellectual qualifications, and have divers other senses, I need not stay to prove that it is not here so taken. Stephen prayeth not to Christ to receive his breath, his graces, or the Holy Ghost, but to receive his rational, immortal soul.

It is not only the soul, but God himself, that is called "a Spirit:" and though the name be fetched from lower things, that is, because that as we have no adequate positive conception of God or spirits, so we can have no adequate proper names for them, but must take up with borrowed names, as answerable to our notions.

Sometimes the word spirit (as Heb. iv. 12, &c.) is distinguished from the soul; and then it either signifieth the superior faculties in the same soul, or the same soul as elevated by grace.

Do you ask, What the soul is? You may also ask, What a man is? And it is pity that a man should not know what a man is. It is our intellectual nature, containing also the sensitive and vegetative; the principle, or first act, by which we live, and feel, and understand, and freely will. The acts tell you what the faculties or powers are, and so what the soul is. If you know what intellection, or reason and free-will are, you may know what it is to have a spiritual nature, essentially containing the power of reasoning and willing. It is thy soul by which thou art thinking and asking what a soul is; and as he that reasoneth to prove that man hath no reason, doth prove that he hath reason by reasoning against it; so he that reasoneth to prove that he hath no soul, doth thereby prove that he hath a reasonable (though abused) soul.

Yet there are some so blind as to question whether they have souls, because they see them not; whereas if they could see them with eyes of flesh they were no souls, for spirits are invisible. They see not the air or wind, and yet they know that air or wind there is. They see not God or

angels, and yet they are fools indeed if they doubt whether there be a God and angels. If they see not their eyes, yet they know that they have eyes, because with those eyes they see other things. And if they know not directly and intuitively that they have rational souls, they might know it by their knowing other things, which without such souls cannot be known. It is just with God that those that live as carnally, and brutishly, and negligently, as if they had no souls to use or care for, should at last be given up to question whether they have souls or no.

O woeful fall! depraved nature! O miserable men, that have so far departed from God, as to deny both themselves and God! or to question whether God be God, and man be man. Return to God, and thou wilt come to thyself. Forget not, man, thy noble nature, thy chiefest part: think not that thou art only shell, because thou seest not through the shell. It is souls that converse by the bodies while they are in flesh. It is thy soul that I am speaking to, and thy soul that understandeth me. When thy soul is gone, I will speak to thee no more. It is thy soul that is the workmanship of God by an immediate or special way of fabrication. "The souls which I have made," Isa. lvii. 16. "He breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul," Gen. ii. 7. It is thy soul that is said to be made after God's image; in that thou art ennobled with a capacious understanding and free-will; and it is thy soul that is the immediate subject of his moral image, even spiritual wisdom, righteousness, and holiness. God hath not hands, and feet, and other members, as thy body hath. How noble a nature is that which is capable of knowing not only things in the world (in its measure), but God himself, and the things of the world that is to come; and capable of loving and enjoying God, and of seeking and serving him in order to that enjoyment! Christ thought not basely of a soul that redeemed souls at such a price, when he made his soul an offering for sin, Isa. liii. 10. Were it not for our immortal souls, would God ever honour us with such relations to him as to be his children? (For he is first the Fa-

ther of spirits (Heb. xii 9), and then the Father of saints.) Should we be called the spouse and the members of Christ? would he be at so much cost upon us? should angels attend us as ministering spirits, if we had not spirits fit to minister to God? Would the Spirit of God himself dwell in us, and quicken and beautify us with his grace, should a world of creatures (whose corporeal substance seems as excellent as ours) attend and serve us, if we were but an ingenious sort of brutes, and had not rational, immortal souls? Should such store of mercies be provided for us, should ministers be provided to preach, and pray, and labour for us, if we had not souls to save or lose? "They watch for your souls as they that must give account," Heb. xiii. 17. Why should they preach in season and out of season, and suffer so much to perform their work, but that they know that "he that winneth souls is wise," Prov. xi. 30; and that "he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, doth save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins," James v. 20. The devil himself may tell you the worth of souls when he compasseth the earth (Job i. 7), and goeth about night and day to deceive them, and devour them (1 Pet. v. 8), and yet can he make you believe that they are so worthless as to be abused to the basest drudgery, to be poisoned with sin and sensuality, to be ventured for a thing of nought?

O sirs! have you such immortal souls, and will you sell them for a lust, for a beastly pleasure, for liberty to glut your flesh, or for the price that Judas sold his Lord for? Is thy soul no more worth than honour, or wealth, or foolish mirth? Is thy soul so base as not to be worth the care and labour of a holy life? Is the world worth all thy care and labour, and shall less be called too much ado, when it is for thy precious soul? Alas! one would think by the careless, fleshly lives of many, that they remember not that they have souls. Have they not need, in the depth of their security, in the height of their ambition, and in the heat of fleshly lusts, to have a monitor to call to them, Remember that thou

art a man, and that thou hast a soul to save or lose? What thinkest thou of thy negligence and carnal life, when thou readest that so holy a man as Paul must keep under his body, and bring it into subjection, lest he should be a cast-away after all his labours? 1 Cor. ix. 25-27. O live not as if the flesh were the man, and its pleasure your felicity; but live as those that have spirits to take care of.

Doct. IV. The spirit of man doth survive the body; it dieth not with it. It is not annihilated; it is not resolved into the essence of some common element of souls, where it loseth its specific form and name. It was still the spirit of Stephen that was received by Christ. It sleepeth not. To confute the dream of those that talk of the sleeping of souls, or any lethargic, unintelligent, or inactive state, of so excellent, capacious, and active a nature, were but to dispute with sleeping men. When we say it is immortal, we mean not that it, or any creature, hath in itself a self-supporting or self-preserving sufficiency; or that they are necessary beings, and not contingent; or primitive beings, and not derived from another by creation. We know that all the world would turn to nothing in a moment if God did but withdraw his preserving and upholding influence, and but suspend that will that doth continue them. He need not exert any positive will or act for their destruction or annihilation. Though *ejusdem est annihilare, cujus est creare*, none can annihilate but God; yet it is by a positive, efficient act of will that he createth; and by a mere cessation of the act of his preserving will he can annihilate. I mean not by any change in him, but by willing the continuance of the creature but till such a period; but yet he that will perpetuate the spirit of man, hath given it a nature (as he hath done the angels) fit to be perpetuated; a nature not guilty of composition and elementary materiality, which might subject it to corruption. So that as there is an aptitude in iron, or silver, or gold to continue longer than grass, or flowers, or flesh; and a reason of its duration may be given a *natura rei*, from that aptitude in subordination to the will of God;

so there is such an aptitude in the nature of the soul to be immortal, which God maketh use of to the accomplishment of his will for its actual perpetuity.

The heathenish Socinians, that deny the immortality of the soul (yea, worse than heathenish, for most heathens do maintain it), must deny to Christ himself, as well as to his members; for he used the like recommendation of his soul to his Father when he was on the cross, as Stephen doth here to him. If "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," be words that prove not the surviving of the spirit of Stephen; then, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," will not prove the surviving of the spirit of Christ. And, then, what do these infidels make of Christ, who also deny his Deity; and consequently, make him nothing but a corpse, when his body was in the grave? How then did he make good his promise to the penitent malefactor? "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." But he that said, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19), did live in the spirit, while he was put to death in the flesh, 1 Pet. iii. 18; and receiveth the spirits of his servants unto life eternal, while their flesh is rotting in the grave. This very text is so clear for this, if there were no other, it might end the controversy with all that believe the holy Scriptures.

I confess there is a sleep of souls, a metaphorical sleep in sin and in security, or else the drowsy opinions of these infidels had never found entertainment in the world; a sleep so deep that the voice of God, in the threatenings of his word, and the alarm of his judgments, and the thunder of his warnings by his most serious ministers, prevail not to awaken the most: so dead a sleep possesseth the most of the ungodly world, that they can quietly sin in the sight of God, at the entrance upon eternity, at the doors of hell, and the calls of God do not awaken them: so dead a sleep, that Scripture justly calls them dead, Eph. ii. 1, 5; and ministers may well call them dead, for alas, it is not our voice that can awake them; they are as dead to us: we draw back the curtains to let in the light, and shew them

that judgment is at hand, and use those true but terrible arguments from wrath and hell, which we are afraid should too much frighten many tender hearers, and yet they sleep on; and our loudest calls, our tears, and our entreaties, cannot awaken them. We cry to them in the name of the Lord; "Awake, thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light," Eph. v. 14. This moral sleep and death of souls, which is the forerunner of everlasting death in misery, we cannot deny. But after death even this sleep shall cease; and God will awaken them with his vengeance, that would not be awaked by his grace. Then, sinner, sleep under the thoughts of sin and God's displeasure, if thou canst. There is no sleeping soul in hell; there are none that are past feeling. The mortal stroke that layeth thy flesh to sleep in the dust, lets out a guilty soul into a world where there is no sleeping; where there is a light irresistible, and a terror and torment, that will keep them waking. If God bid thee awake by the flames of justice, he will have no nay. The first sight and feeling which will surprise thee when thou hast left this flesh, will awake thee to eternity, and do more than we could do in time, and convince thee that there is no sleeping state for separated souls.

Doct. V. Christ doth receive the spirits of the saints when they leave the flesh.

Here we shall first tell you what Christ's receiving of the spirit is. The word signifieth, to take it as acceptable to himself; and it comprehendeth these particulars.

1. That Christ will not leave the new-departed soul to the will of Satan, its malicious enemy. How ready is he to receive us to perdition, if Christ refuse us, and receive us not to salvation! He that now seeketh as a roaring lion night and day, as our adversary, to devour us by deceit, will then seek to devour us by execution. How glad was he when God gave him leave but to touch the goods, and children and body of Job! And how much more would it please his enmity to have power to torment our souls! But the soul that fled to the arms of Christ by faith in the day

of trial, shall then find itself in the arms of Christ in the moment of its entrance upon eternity. O Christian, whether thou now feel it to thy comfort or not, thou shalt then feel it to the ravishing of thy soul, that thou didst not fly to Christ in vain, nor trust him in vain to be thy Saviour. Satan shall be for ever disappointed of his desired prey. Long wast thou combating with him ; frequently and strongly wast thou tempted by him. Thou oft thoughtest it was a doubtful question, who should win the day, and whether ever thou shouldst hold out and be saved ; but when thou passest from the flesh, in thy last extremity, in the end of thy greatest and most shaking fears, when Satan is ready, if he might, to carry thy soul to hell ; then, even then, shalt thou find that thou hast won the day. And yet not thou, but Christ is he that hath been victorious for thee ; even as when thou livedst the life of faith, it was not thou, but Christ lived in thee, Gal. ii. 20. Thou mayst fear at thy departure, and leave the flesh with terror, and imagine that Satan will presently devour thee ; but the experience of a moment will end thy fears, and thou shalt triumph against thy conquered foe. He that saved thee from the dominion of a tempting devil, will certainly save thee from him when he would torment thee. Here he would have us that he may sift us, and get advantage on our weakness ; but Christ prayeth for us, and strengtheneth us, that our faith may not fail, Luke xxii. 31. And he that saveth us from the sin, will save us from the punishment, and from Satan's fury, as he did from his fraud.

2. Christ's receiving us doth include his favourable entertainment and welcoming the departed soul. Poor soul, thou wast never so welcome to thy dearest friend, nor into the arms of a father, a husband or a wife, as thou shalt be then into the presence and embracements of thy Lord. Thou hearest, and readest, and partly believest, now how he loveth us, even as his spouse and members, as his flesh and bone, Eph. vi. But then thou shalt feel how he loveth thee in particular. If the angels of God have joy at thy conversion, what joy will there be in heaven at thy entrance

into that salvation. And sure those angels will bid thee welcome, and concur with Christ in that triumphant joy. If a returning prodigal find himself in the arms of his father's love, and welcomed home with his kisses, and his robe and feast, what welcome then may a cleansed, conquered soul expect when it cometh into the presence of glorious love, and is purposely to be received with such demonstrations of love as may be fitted to magnify the love of God, which exceedeth all the love of man, as omnipotency doth exceed our impotency, and therefore will exceed it in the effects! Though thou hast questioned here in the dark, whether thou wert welcome to Christ when thou camest to him in prayer, or when thou camest to his holy table, yet then doubt of thy welcome if thou canst.

Oh had we but one moment's sense of the delights of the embraced soul that is newly received by Christ into his kingdom, it would make us think we were in heaven already, and transport us more than the disciples that saw the transfiguration of Christ; and make us say, in comparing this with all the glory of the world, "Master, it is good for us to be here;" but in consideration of the full, to say, It is better to be there. But it must not be: earth must not be so happy as to have a moment's sense of the inconceivable pleasures of the received soul; that is the reward and crown, and therefore not fit for us here in our conflict.

But low things may, by dark resemblance, a little help us to conceive of something that is like them in a low degree. How would you receive your son, or husband, the next day after some bloody fight, where he had escaped with the victory? or your child, or friend, that arrived safely after a long and a dangerous voyage? Would you not run and meet him, and with joy embrace him, if he had been many years absent, and were now come home? I tell thee, poor soul, thy Saviour hath a larger heart, and another kind of love than thou; and other reasons of greater force to move him to bid thee welcome into his presence.

3. Christ's receiving the departed soul includeth the state of blessedness into which he doth receive it. If you ask

what that is, I answer, it is unto himself, to be with him where he is; and that in general is full of comfort, if there were no more; for we know that Christ is in no ill place; he is glorified at the "right hand of the Majesty on high," Heb. i. 3. And that the souls of the righteous, and at last their bodies, are received to himself, he often telleth us: "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be," John xii. 26. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also," John xiv. 3. And, in the meantime, when we once are absent from the body, we are present with the Lord (2 Cor. v. 8), and that is in "the building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," verse 1. Paul, therefore, desired "to depart, and to be with Christ," as being far better, Phil. i. 23; and Christ promised the converted thief, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise," Luke xxiii. 43. And our state after the resurrection hath the same description, "And so shall we ever be with the Lord," 1 Thess. iv. 17. And what it shall be he declareth himself, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me," John xvii. 24. The soul of Lazarus (Luke xvi.) was received into Abraham's bosom, where he is said to be comforted. The heavens receive Christ (Acts iii. 21), and therefore the heavens receive the spirits that go to him, even the spirits of the just made perfect, Heb. xii. 23; that is, that are crowned with Christ in glory, and freed from the imperfections and evils of this life. And so that is plain, though some would pervert it, that "whether we wake or sleep, we may live together with him," 1 Thess. v. 10. Not whether we wake to righteousness, or sleep in sin, for such sleepers live not with him; nor whether we wake by solicitude, or sleep in security; nor whether we naturally wake or sleep only, but whether we live, or die, and so our bodies sleep in death, yet we live together with him. In a word, Christ will receive us into a participation of his joy and glory; into a joy as great as our nature shall be capable of, and

more than we can now desire, and that the largest heart on earth can justly conceive of or comprehend. And because all this tells you but to the ear, stay yet but a little while, and experimental sight and feeling shall tell you what this receiving is, even when we receive the kingdom that cannot be moved (Heb. xii. 28), and when we receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls, 1 Pet. i. 9.

Doct. VI. A dying Christian may confidently and comfortably recommend his spirit to Christ, to be received by him.

Though he have formerly been a grievous sinner, though at the present he be frail and faulty, though he be weak in faith, and love, and duty, though his body by sickness be become unfit to serve his soul, and as to present sensibility, activity, or joy, he seem to be past the best, or to be nothing, though the tempter would aggravate his sins, and weakness, and dulness to his discouragement, yet he may, he must, with confidence recommend his spirit to Christ, to be received by him.

O learn his doctrine, Christians, that you may use it in the hour of your last distress. The hour is near; the distress will be the greatest that ever you were in. As well as we seem now while we are hearing this, our turn is nigh. The midwife is not so necessary to the life of the child that receiveth it into the world, as Christ's receiving will be then to our everlasting life. To say over heartlessly these words, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," will be no more than a dead-hearted hypocrite may do. Such formal lip-service in life or at death doth profit nothing to salvation; now make such necessary preparation, that at death you may have well-grounded confidence that Jesus Christ will receive your spirits.

1. And first, let me bring this to the carnal, unprepared sinner.

Poor sinner, what thoughts hast thou of thy dying hour, and of thy departing soul? I wonder at thee what thoughts thou hast of them, that thou canst sin so boldly, and live so carelessly, and talk or hear of the life to come so senselessly

as thou dost ! Thou mightest well think I wronged thee, if I took thee to be such a brute as not to know that thou must die. Thy soul that brought thy body hither, that causeth it now to hear and understand, that carrieth it up and down the world, must very shortly be required of thee, and must seek another habitation. What thoughts hast thou of thy departing soul ? Will Christ receive it ? Hast thou made sure of that ? Or hast thou made it thy principal care and business to make sure ? Oh, what doth intoxicate the brains of sensual, worldly men, that they drown themselves in the cares of this life, and ride and run for transitory riches, and live upon the smoke of honour and applause, and never soberly and seriously bethink them whether Christ will receive their departed souls ! That they can fill their minds with other thoughts, and fill their mouths with other talk, and consume their time in other inconsiderable employments, and take no more care, and spend no more thoughts, and words, and time about the entertainment of their departing souls ! When they are even ready to be gone, and stand, as it were, on tiptoe ; when fevers, and consumptions, and many hundred diseases are all abroad so busily distributing their summonses ; and when the gates of death have so many passengers crowding in, and souls a remaking such haste away, will you not consider what shall become of yours ? Will you say that you hope well, and you must venture ? If God had appointed you nothing to do to prepare for your safe passage and entertainment with Christ, you might then take up with such an answer ; but it is a mad adventure to leave all undone that is necessary to your salvation, and then to say, you must put it to the venture. If you die in an unrenewed and unjustified state, it is past all venture ; for it is certain that Christ will not receive you. You may talk of hoping, but it is not a matter to be hoped for. Hope that God will make good every word of his promise, and spare not ; but there is no more hope that Christ will receive the souls of any but of his members, than there is that he will prove a liar. He never promised to save any others ; and that is not all, but he hath

declared and professed frequently that he will not. And you are no believers if you will not believe him; and if you believe him, you must believe that the unbelievers, the unregenerate, the unholy, and the workers of iniquity, shall not be received into the kingdom of heaven, for he hath professed it, John iii. 3, 36; Heb. xii. 14; Matt. vii. 23.

If Christ would receive the souls of all, your venture then had reason for it; or if he had left it as a thing that depended only on his unrevealed will, and not on any preparations of our own, we might then have quit ourselves of the care, and cast it all on him, as being his part, and none of ours. But it is not so, I hope I need not tell you that it is not so. Believe it, the question must be now resolved, and resolved by yourselves, whether Christ shall receive your departed souls, or cast them off as firebrands for hell. He hath made the law, and set down the terms already to which he will unalterably stand, and which we must trust to. It is now that you must labour to be accepted of him, "for we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad," 2 Cor. v. 10. O sirs! this is the reason of our importunity with you. "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men," saith the apostle in the next words, ver. 11. We know that the sentence will be just, and that it is now in your own hands what judgment then shall pass upon you. And if just now your souls were passing hence, before you went from the place you sit in, would you think any care could be too great to make sure that they should go to happiness. Oh that you would consider how much it is your own work, and how much it resteth on yourselves what Christ shall then do with you! Then you will cry to him for mercy, O cast not away a miserable soul! Lord, receive me into thy kingdom! But now he must entreat you to be saved, and to be the people that he may then receive, and you will not hear him. And if you will not hear him when he calleth on you, and beseecheth you to repent and to prepare, as sure as Christ is Christ, he will not hear you when you cry and call for

mercy too late in your extremity. Read Prov. i. and you will see this is true. It is you that are to be entreated that Christ may receive you, for the unwillingness and backwardness is on your part. You are now poisoning your souls by sin; and when we cannot entreat you either to forbear, or to take the vomit of repentance, yet when you are gasping and dying of your own wilful self-murder, you will then cry to Christ, and think he must receive you upon terms inconsistent with his justice, holiness, and truth. But flatter not yourselves, it will not be. This is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. Refuse it now, and it is lost for ever. O sirs, if this were the hour, and you were presently to be received or refused, would you blame me to cry and call to you with all the fervour of my soul, if I knew that it were in your own choice whether you would go to heaven or hell? Why, now it is in your choice. Life and death are set before you. Christ will receive you if you will but come within the capacity of his acceptance. If you will not, there will then be no remedy. It is a doleful thing to observe how Satan doth bewitch poor sinners. That when time is gone, and the door of mercy is shut against them, they would think no cries too loud for mercy, and no importunity too great. For Christ telleth us, that then they will cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us," Matt. xxv. 10, 11. And yet now, when the door stands open, no arguments, no earnestness, no tears, can entreat them to enter in. Then there is not the most senseless sinner of you all but would cry more strongly than Esau for the blessing, when his tears could find no place for repentance, Heb. xii. 16, 17; Lord, receive a miserable soul! O whither shall I go if thou receive me not! I must else be tormented in those scorching flames. And yet now you will sell your birthright for one morsel; for a little of Judas's or Gehazi's gain, for the applause of worms, for the pleasing of your flesh that is turning to corruption, for the delights of gluttony, drunkenness, sports, or lust. There is not a man of you but would then pray more earnestly than those that you now deride for

earnest praying, as if they whined, and were ridiculous. And yet now you will neither be serious in prayer, nor hear Christ, or his messengers, when he maketh it his earnest request to you to come in to him that you may have life, John v. 40. Then you will knock when the door is shut, and cry, Lord, open to a miserable sinner ! and yet now you will not open unto him, when by his word and Spirit, his mercies and afflictions, he standeth at the door of your stubborn hearts, and calleth on you to repent and turn to God ; now our entreaties cannot so much as bring you on your knees, or bring you to one hour's serious thoughts about the state of those souls that are so near their doom. O sirs ! for your souls' sake, lay by your obstinacy. Pity those souls that then you will beg of Christ to pity. Do not you damn them by your sloth and sin in the day of your visitation, and then cry in vain to Christ to save them when it is too late. Yet the door of grace is open, but how speedily will it be shut ! One stroke of an apoplexy, a consumption, a fever, can quickly shut it, and then you may tear your hearts with crying, " Lord, open to us," and all in vain. O did you but see departed souls, as you see the corpse that is left behind ; did you see how they are treated at their removal from the flesh ; how some are taken and others left ; how some are welcomed to Christ, and others are abhorred, and turned over to the tormentor, and thrust out with implacable indignation and disdain, Luke xiii. 28 ; Prov. i. 24, 26, 27 ; sure you would enter into serious consideration this day, what it is that makes this difference, and why Christ so useth the one and the other, and what must be done now by the soul that would be received then. Alas ! men will do any thing but that which they should do. Among the superstitious papists the conceit of a deliverance from purgatory makes them bequeath their lands and moneys to priests and friars to pray for them when they are dead, and to have other men cry to Christ to receive them, and open to them, when time is past ; and yet now in the accepted time, now when it is at your choice, and the door is open, men live

as if they were past feeling, and cared not what became of them at the last, and would not be beholden to Christ to receive them, when the deceitful world hath cast them off.

And now, beloved hearers all, I would make it my most earnest request to you, as one that knoweth we are all passing hence, and foreseeth the case of a departed soul, that you would now, without any more delay, prepare and make sure that you may be received into the everlasting habitations: and to this end, I shall more distinctly, though briefly, tell you, 1. What souls they are that Christ will receive, and what he will not; and, consequently, what you must do to be received. 2. What considerations should stir you up to this preparation.

1. Nothing is more sure than that Christ will not receive, 1. Any unregenerate, unconverted soul, John iii. 3, 5; Matt. xviii. 3; that is, not renewed and sanctified by his Spirit, Rom. viii. 9; Heb. xii. 14; Acts xxvi. 18. They must have the new and heavenly nature that will ever come to heaven. Without this you are morally incapable of it. Heaven is the proper inheritance of saints, Col. i. 12. This heavenly nature and Spirit is your earnest: if you have this you are sealed up unto salvation, 2 Cor. i. 22; Eph. i. 13; iv. 30.

2. Christ will receive none but those that make it now their work to lay up a treasure in heaven, rather than upon the earth, Matt. vi. 20, 21; and that seek it in the first place, Matt. vi. 33; and can be content to part with all to purchase it, Matt. xiii. 44, 46; Luke xiv. 33; xviii. 22. An earthly-minded worldling is incapable of heaven in that condition, Phil. iii. 17, 18; Luke xvi. 13. You must take it for your portion, and set your hearts on it, if ever you will come thither, Matt. vi. 21; Col. iii. 1-3.

3. Christ will receive no soul at last, but such as sincerely received him as their Lord and Saviour now, and gave up themselves to him, and received his word, and yield obedience to it, and received his Spirit, and were cleansed by him from their iniquities, John i. 11, 12; Luke xix. 27. "That all they might be damned that believed not the truth,

but had pleasure in unrighteousness," 2 Thess. ii. 10, 12. They are God's own words; be not offended at them, but believe and fear. "He hateth all the workers of iniquity," and will say to them, "Depart from me, I know you not," Psalm v. 5; Matt. vii. 23.

4. He will receive none but those that loved his servants, that bore his holy image, and received them according to their abilities, Matt. xxv. 40, 41, &c. And if he will say to those that did not entertain them, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," what will he say to those that hate and persecute them? 1 John iii. 14; v. 2.

5. He will receive none but those that live to him in the body, and use his gifts and talents to his service, and make it their chief business to serve, and honour, and please him in the world, Matt. xxv. 21, 26; 2 Cor. v. 9, 15; Gal. vi. 7, 8; and live not to the pleasing of the flesh, but have crucified it and its lusts, Rom. viii. 1, 13; Gal. v. 24.

Examine all these texts of Scripture (for the matter is worthy of your study), and you will see what souls they are that Christ will then receive, and what he will reject. You may see also what you must now be and do, if you will be then received. If you are not regenerate by the Spirit of God (though you may be sacramentally regenerate in baptism); if you are not justified by Christ (though you may be absolved by a minister); if you seek not heaven with higher estimation and resolutions than any felicity on earth, and take not God for your satisfying portion (though you be never so religious in subserviency to a fleshly, worldly happiness); if you receive not Christ as your only Saviour, and set him not in the throne and government of your hearts and lives (though you may go with men for current Christians); if you hate not sin, if you love not the holy image and children of God, and use them not accordingly; if you crucify not the flesh, and die not to the world, and deny not yourselves, and live not unto God, as making it your chief business and happiness to please him; I say, if this be not your case, as sure as you are men, if you died this hour in this condition, Christ will not own you, but

turn you off with a "Depart, ye cursed." You may as well think of reconciling light and darkness, or persuade a man to live on the food of beasts, or the stomach to welcome deadly poison, as to think that Christ will receive an ungodly, earthly, guilty soul.

Deceive not yourselves, sinners. If God could have entertained the ungodly, and heaven could hold unholy souls, answer me, then, these two or three questions.

Quest. 1. What need Christ, then, to have shed his blood, or become a sacrifice for sin? If he could have received the ungodly, he might have done it upon cheaper rates. This feigned him to have died to no purpose, but to bring the unsanctified to heaven, that might have been as well entertained there without his sufferings.

Quest. 2. To what use doth Christ send the Holy Ghost to sanctify his elect, or send his word and ministers to promote it, if they may come to heaven unsanctified?

Quest. 3. If the ungodly go to heaven, what use is hell for? There is no hell, if this be true. But you will quickly find that to be too good news to the ungodly to be true.

2. In Luke xvi. Christ teacheth us our duty by the parable of the steward, that asketh himself beforehand, what he shall do when he must be no longer steward, and contriveth it so that others may receive him when he is cast off; and he applieth it to us that must now so provide, that when we fail we may be received into the everlasting habitations. This is the work that we have all to mind. We always knew that this world would fail us. Oh how uncertain is your tenure of the dwellings that you now possess! Are you provided, certainly provided, whither to go, and who shall receive you when your stewardship is ended, and you must needs go hence? O think of these considerations that should move you presently to provide.

1. Your cottages of earth are ready to drop down, and it is a stormy time, there are many sicknesses abroad. One blast may quickly lay them in the dust; and then the flesh that had so much care, and was thought worthy to

be preferred before the soul, must be laid and left to rot in darkness, to avoid the annoyance of the living : and when you may justly look every hour when you are turned out of these dwellings that you are in, is it not time to be provided of some other ?

2. Consider, if Christ should not receive thy spirit, how unspeakably deplorable thy case will be. I think there is no man in all this assembly so mad, that would take all the world now to have his soul refused then by Christ, that would professedly make and subscribe such a bargain ; and yet, alas, how many are they that will be hired for a smaller price, even for the pleasure of a sin, to do that which Christ himself hath told them will cause him to refuse them ! O sirs, for aught you know, before to-morrow, or within this week, you may be put to know these things by trial, and your souls may be refused or received ; and woe to you that ever you were men, if Christ receive you not.

Consider, 1. If Christ receive thee not, thou hast no friend left then to receive thee. Thy house, and land, and riches, and reputation, are all left behind ; none of them will go with thee ; or, if they did, they could afford thee no relief. Thy bosom friends, thy powerful defenders, are all left behind ; or if they go before thee, or with thee, they can do nothing there, that could do so much for thee here. No minister so holy, no friend so kind, no patron so powerful, that can give thee any entertainment, if Christ refuse to entertain thee. Look to the right hand or to the left, there will be none to help thee, or care for thy forsaken soul. Then thou wilt find that one Christ had been a better friend than all the great ones upon earth.

2. If Christ, then, receive not thy departed soul, the devils will receive it. I am loth to speak so terrible a word, but that it must be spoken, if you will be awaked to prevent it. He that deceived thee will then plead conquest, and claim thee as his due, that he may torment thee. And if the devil say, This soul is mine, and Christ do not rescue and justify thee, but say so too, no heart is able to conceive the horror that will then overwhelm thee. Doth not the

reading of the sentence make thee tremble, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?" Matt. xxv. 41. This is that dreadful delivering up to Satan, when the soul is excommunicated from the city of God. O, therefore, if thou be yet unreconciled to God, agree with him quickly, while thou art here in the way, lest he deliver thee to this terrible jailer and executioner, and thou be cast into the prison of the bottomless pit: "Verily, I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing," Matt. v. 25, 26.

3. The greatness of the change will increase the amazement and misery of thy spirit, if Christ receive it not. To leave a world that thou wast acquainted with; a world that pleased thee, and entertained thee; a world where thou hadst long thy business and delight, and where, wretched man, thou hadst made the chief provision, and laid up thy treasure: this will be a sad part of the change. To enter into a world where thou art a stranger, and much worse, and see the company and the things that before thou never sawest, and to find things go there so contrary to thy expectation; to be turned, with Dives, from thy sumptuous dwelling, attendance, and fare, into a place of easeless torment: this will be a sadder part of thy change. Here the rich would have received thee, the poor would have served and flattered thee, thy friends would have comforted thee, thy play-fellows would have been merry with thee. But there, alas! how the case is altered! all these have done; the table is withdrawn, the game is ended, the mirth is ceased, and now succeedeth, "Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented," Luke xvi. 25. Oh, dreadful change to those that made the world their home, and little dreamed, or did but dream, of such a day! Never to see this world again, unless by such reviews as will torment them; never to have sport or pleasure more; and for these to have such company, such thoughts, such work and usage, as God hath told us is in hell.

4. If Christ receive thee not, the burden of thy sins will overwhelm thee, and conscience will have no relief. Sin will not then appear in so harmless a shape as now : it will then seem a more odious or frightful thing. Oh, to remember these days of folly, of careless, sluggish, obstinate folly, of sottish negligence, and contempt of grace, will be a more tormenting thing than you will now believe. If such sermons and discourses as foretell it are troublesome to thee, what then will that sad experience be !

5. The wrath of an offended God will overwhelm thee. This will be thy hell. He that was so merciful in the time of mercy, will be most terrible and implacable when that time is past, and make men know that Christ and mercy are not neglected, refused, and abused at so cheap a rate, as they would needs imagine in the time of their delirium.

6. It will overwhelm the soul if Christ receive it not, to see that thou art entering upon eternity, even into an everlasting state of woe. Then thou wilt think, O whither am I going ? What must I endure ? and how long, how long ? When shall my miseries have an end ? and when shall I come back ? and how shall I ever be delivered ? Oh now what thoughts wilt thou have of the wonderful design of God in man's redemption ! Now thou wilt better understand what a Saviour was worth, and how he should have been believed in, and how his gospel and his saving grace should have been entertained.

Oh that the Lord would now open your hearts to entertain it, that you may not then value it to your vexation, that would not value it now to your relief ! Poor sinner, for the Lord's sake, and for thy soul's sake, I beg now of thee, as if it were on my knees, that thou wouldst cast away thy sinful cares and pleasures, and open thy heart, and now receive thy Saviour and his saving grace, as ever thou wouldst have him then receive thy trembling, departed soul ! Turn to him now, that he may not turn thee from him then. Forsake him not for a flattering world, a little transitory, vain delight, as ever thou wouldst not then have

thy departed soul forsaken by him! O delay not, man, but now, even now receive him, that thou mayst avoid so terrible a danger, and put so great a question presently out of doubt, and be able comfortably to say, I have received Christ, and he will receive me; if I die this night he will receive me: then thou mayst sleep quietly, and live merrily, without any disparagement to thy reason. O yield to this request, sinner, of one that desireth thy salvation. If thou wert now departing, and I would not pray earnestly to Christ to receive thy soul, thou wouldst think I were uncharitable. Alas! it will be one of these days; and it is thee that I must entreat, and thyself must be prevailed with, or there is no hope. Christ sendeth me to thyself, and saith, that he is willing to receive thee, if now thou wilt receive him, and be sanctified and ruled by him. The matter stops at thy own regardless, wilful heart. What sayest thou? Wilt thou receive Christ now, or not? Wilt thou be a new creature, and live to God, by the principle of his Spirit, and the rule of his word, to please him here, that thou mayst live with him for ever? Wilt thou take up this resolution, and make this covenant with God this day? O give me a word of comfort, and say, thou art resolved, and wilt deliver up thyself to Christ. That which is my comfort now on thy behalf, will be ten thousand-fold more thy comfort then, when thou partakest of the benefit. And if thou grieve us now, by denying thy soul to Christ, it will be at last ten thousand-fold more thy grief. Refuse not our requests and Christ's request now, as ever thou wouldst not have him refuse thee then, and thy requests. It is men's turning away now from Christ that will cause Christ then to turn from them. "The turning away of the simple slayeth them, and they then eat but the fruit of their own way, and are filled with their own devices," Prov. i. 31, 32. "See then that ye now refuse not him that speaketh; for there is no escaping if you turn away from him that speaketh from heaven," Heb. xii. 25.

What would you say yourselves to the man that would not be dissuaded from setting his house on fire, and then

would pray and cry importunately to God that he would keep it from being burnt? Or of the man that will not be dissuaded from taking poison, and then when it gripeth him will cry to God to save his life? Or of the man that will go to sea in a leaking, broken vessel, yea, himself will make those breaches in it that shall let the water in, and when it is sinking will cry to God to save him from being drowned? And will you do this about so great a matter as the everlasting state of your immortal souls? Will you now be worldlings, and sensualists, and ungodly, and undo yourselves, and then cry, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," at the last? What! receive an unholy spirit? Will you not knock till the door is shut? when he telleth you, that "it is not every one that will cry Lord, Lord, that shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of his Father which is in heaven," Matt. vii. 21.

Lastly, consider with what unspeakable joy it will fill thy soul to be then received by the Lord. Oh what a joyful word will it be, when thou shalt hear, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." If thou wilt not have this to be thy case, thou shalt see those received to the increase of thy grief whom thou refusedst here to imitate: "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and those that from east, west, north, and south, shall sit there with them, and thou thrust out," Luke xiii. 27-29.

I have been long in this part of my application, having to do with souls that are ready to depart, and are in so sad an unprepared state, as is not to be thought on but with great compassion; I am next to come to that part of the application which I chiefly intended, to those that are the heirs of life.

2. O you that are members of Jesus Christ, receive this cordial which may corroborate your hearts against all inordinate fears of death. Let it come when it will, you may boldly recommend your departing souls into the hands of Christ. Let it be by a lingering disease or by an acute, by

a natural or a violent death, at the fulness of your age or in the flower of your youth, death can but separate the soul from flesh, but not from Christ: whether you die poor or rich, at liberty or in prison, in your native country or a foreign land, whether you be buried in the earth or cast into the sea, death shall but send your souls to Christ. Though you die under the reproach and slanders of the world, and your names be cast out among men as evil-doers, yet Christ will take your spirits to himself. Though your souls depart in fear and trembling, though they want the sense of the love of God, and doubt of pardon and peace with him, yet Christ will receive them.

I know thou wilt be ready to say, that thou art unworthy, Will he receive so unworthy a soul as mine? But if thou be a member of Christ thou art worthy in him to be accepted. Thou hast a worthiness of aptitude, and Christ hath a worthiness of merit.

The day that cometh upon such at unawares, that have their hearts overcharged with surfeiting, drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and as a snare surpriseth the inhabitants of the earth, shall be the day of thy great deliverance; "Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man," Luke **xxi.** 34-36. "They that are accounted worthy to obtain that world can die no more; for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God," Luke **xx.** 35, 36.

Object. Oh but my sins are great and many; and will Christ ever receive so ignorant, so earthly and impure a soul as mine?

Ans. If he have freed thee from the reign of sin, by giving thee a will that would fain be fully delivered from it, and given thee a desire to be perfectly holy, he will finish the work that he hath begun; and will not bring thee defiled into heaven, but will wash thee in his blood, and separate all the remnant of corruption from thy soul, when he separateth thy soul from flesh: there needs no purgatory, but his blood and Spirit in the instant of death

shall deliver thee, that he may present thee spotless to the Father.

O fear not then to trust thy soul with him that will receive it ; and fear not death that can do thee no more harm. And when once thou hast overcome the fears of death, thou wilt be the more resolute in thy duty, and faithful to Christ, and above the power of most temptations, and wilt not fear the face of man, when death is the worst that man can bring thee to. It is true, death is dreadful ; but it is as true that the arms of Christ are joyful. It is an displeasing thing to leave the bodies of our friends in the earth ; but it is unspeakable pleasure to their souls to be received into the heavenly society by Christ.

And how confidently, quietly, and comfortably you may commend your departing spirits to be received by Christ, be informed by these considerations following.

1. Your spirits are Christ's own ; and may you not trust him with his own ? As they are his by the title of creation, " All souls are mine, saith the Lord," Ezek. xviii. 4 ; so also by the title of redemption, " We are not our own, we are bought with a price," 1 Cor. vi. 19.

Say therefore to him, Lord, I am thine much more than my own ; receive thine own, take care of thine own. Thou drewest me to consent to thy gracious covenant, and I resigned myself and all I had to thee. And thou swarest to me, and I became thine, Ezek. xvi. 8. And I stand to the covenant that I made, though I have offended thee. I am sinful, but I am thine, and would not forsake thee, and change my Lord and Master, for a world. O know thine own, and own my soul that hath owned thee, though it hath sinned against thee. Thy sheep know thy voice, and follow not a stranger ; now know thy poor sheep, and leave them not to the devourer. Thy lambs have been preserved by thee among wolves in the world, preserve me now from the enemy of souls. I am thine, O save me (Psal. cxix. 94), and lose not that which is thine own !

2. Consider that thou art his upon so dear a purchase, as that he is the more engaged to receive thee. Hath he

bought thee by the price of his most precious blood, and will he cast thee off? Hath he come down on earth to seek and save thee, and will he now forsake thee? Hath he lived in flesh a life of poverty, and suffered reproach, and scorn, and buffetings, and been nailed to the cross, and put to cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and will he now forget his love, and sufferings, and himself forsake thee after this? Did he himself on the cross commend his spirit into his Father's hands, and will he not receive thy spirit when thou at death commendest it to him? He hath known himself what it is to have a human soul separated from the body, and the body buried in a grave, and there lamented by surviving friends. And why did he this, but that he might be fit to receive and relieve thee in the like condition? O, who would not be encouraged to encounter death, and lie down in a grave, that believeth that Christ did so before him, and considereth why he went that way, and what a conquest he had made!

I know an argument from the death of Christ will not prove his love to the souls of the ungodly so as to infer that he will receive them; but it will prove his reception of believers' souls: "He that spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32,) is an infallible argument as to believers, but not as to those that do reject him.

Say therefore to him, O my Lord! can it be that thou couldst come down in the flesh, and be abused, and spit upon, and slandered, and crucified; that thou couldst bleed, and die, and be buried for me, and now be unwilling to receive me? that thou shouldst pay so dear for souls, and now refuse to entertain them? that thou shouldst die to save them from the devil, and now wilt leave them to his cruelty? that thou hast conquered him, and yet wilt suffer him at last to have the prey? To whom can a departing soul fly for refuge, and for entertainment, if not to thee that diedst for souls, and sufferedst thine to be separated from the flesh, that we might have all assurance of thy compassion unto ours? Thou didst openly declare upon the cross, that the

reason of thy dying was to receive departed souls, when thou didst thus encourage the soul of a penitent malefactor, by telling him, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." O give the same encouragement or entertainment to this sinful soul that flieth unto thee, that trusteth in thy death and merits, and is coming to receive thy doom!

3. Consider that Jesus Christ is full of love and tender compassion to souls. What his tears over Lazarus compelled the Jews to say, "Behold how he loved him," John xi. 36; the same his incarnation, life, and death should much more stir us up to say, with greater admiration, Behold how he loved us. The foregoing words, though the shortest verse in all the Bible, "Jesus wept" (verse 35), are long enough to prove his love to Lazarus: and the Holy Ghost would not have the tears of Christ to be unknown to us, that his love may be the better known. But we have a far larger demonstration of his love; "He loved us and gave himself for us," Gal. ii. 20. And by what gift could he better testify his love? "He loved us, and washed us in his blood," Rev. i. 5. He loved us, as the Father loveth him, John xv. 9. And may we not comfortably go to him that loved us? Will love refuse us when we fly unto him?

Say then to Christ, O thou that hast loved my soul, receive it! I commend it not unto an enemy. Can that love reject me, and cast me into hell, that so oft embraced me on earth, and hath declared itself by such ample testimonies!

Oh had we but more love to Christ, we should be more sensible of his love to us, and then we should trust him, and love would make us hasten to him, and with confidence cast ourselves upon him!

4. Consider that it is the office of Christ to save souls, and to receive them, and therefore we may boldly recommend them to his hands. The Father sent him to be the Saviour of the world, 1 John iv. 14; and he is effectually the Saviour of his body, Eph. v. 23. And may we not trust him in his undertaken office, that would trust a physician or any other in his office, if we judge him faithful? Yea, he is

engaged by covenant to receive us: when we gave up ourselves to him, he also became ours; and we did it on this condition, that he should receive and save us. And it was the condition of his own undertaking; he drew the covenant himself and tendered it first to us, and assumed his own conditions, as he imposed ours.

Say then to him, My Lord, I expected but the performance of thy covenants, and the discharge of thine undertaken office: as thou hast caused me to believe in thee, and love and serve thee, and perform the conditions which thou laidest on me, though with many sinful failings, which thou hast pardoned; so now let my soul, that hath trusted on thee, have the full experience of thy fidelity, and take me to thyself according to thy covenant. "O now remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused him to hope!" Psal. cxix. 49. How many precious promises hast thou left us, that we shall not be forsaken by thee, but that we shall be with thee where thou art, that we may behold thy glory! For this cause art thou the Mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance, Heb. ix. 15. According to thy covenant, "Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come," 1 Tim. iv. 8. And when we have done thy will (notwithstanding our lamentable imperfections) we are to receive the promise, Heb. x. 36. O, now receive me into the kingdom which thou hast promised to them that love thee! James i. 12.

5. Consider how able Christ is to answer thine expectations. All power is given him in heaven and earth (Matt. xxviii. 19), and all things are given by the Father into his hands, John xiii. 3. All judgment is committed to him, John v. 22. It is fully in his power to receive and save thee; and Satan cannot touch thee but by his consent. Fear not, then; he is the first and last, that liveth, and was dead; and behold he liveth for ever more, amen; and hath the keys of hell and death, Rev. i. 17, 18.

Say, then, If thou wilt, Lord, thou canst save this departing soul! O, say but the word, and I shall live! Lay but thy rebuke upon the destroyer, and he shall be restrained. When my Lord and dearest Saviour hath the keys, how can I be kept out of thy kingdom, or cast into the burning lake? Were it a matter of difficulty unto thee, my soul might fear lest heaven would not be opened to it; but thy love hath overcome the hindrances; and it is as easy to receive me as to love me.

6. Consider how perfectly thy Saviour is acquainted with the place that thou art going to, and the company and employment which thou must there have; and, therefore, as there is nothing strange to him, so the ignorance and strangeness in thyself should therefore make thee fly to him, and trust him, and recommend thy soul to him, and say, Lord, it would be terrible to my departing soul to go into a world that I never saw, and into a place so strange, and unto company so far above me; but that I know there is nothing strange to thee, and thou knowest it for me, and I may better trust thy knowledge than mine own. When I was a child I knew not mine own inheritance, nor what was necessary to the daily provisions for my life; but my parents knew it that cared for me. The eyes must see for all the body, and not every member see for itself. Oh, cause me as quietly and believingly to commit my soul to thee, to be possessed of the glory which thou seest and possessest, as if I had seen and possessed it myself, and let thy knowledge be my trust!

7. Consider that Christ hath provided a glorious receptacle for faithful souls, and it cannot be imagined that he will lose his preparations, or be frustrate of his end. All that he did and suffered on earth was for this end. He therefore became the Captain of our salvation, and was made perfect through sufferings, that he might bring many sons to glory, Heb. ii. 10. He hath taken possession in our nature, and is himself interceding for us in the heavens, Heb. vii. 25. And for whom doth he provide this heavenly building, not made with hands, but for believers? If,

therefore, any inordinate fear surprise thee, remember what he hath said: "Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also," John xiv. 1-3.

Say, therefore, Lord, when thou hadst made this lower narrow world, thou wouldst not leave it uninhabited; for man thou madest it, and man thou placedst in it. And when thou hast prepared that more capacious, glorious world for thy redeemed flock, it cannot be that thou wilt shut them out. O, therefore, receive my fearful soul, and help me to obey thy own command, Luke xii. 32, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." O, let me hear that joyful sentence, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," Matt. xxv. 34.

8. Consider that Christ hath received thy soul unto grace, and therefore he will receive it unto glory. He hath quickened us who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in times past we walked, &c. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins and trespasses, quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, Eph. ii. 1-6. The state of grace is the kingdom of heaven, as well as the state of glory, Matt. iii. 2; x. 7; xiii. 11, 24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47. By grace thou hast the heavenly birth and nature: we are first-born to trouble and sorrow in the world; but we are new-born to everlasting joy and pleasure. Grace maketh us heirs, and giveth us title, and therefore at death we shall have possession. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us, 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. The great work was done in the day of thy

renovation ; then thou wast entered into the household of God, and made a fellow-citizen with the saints, and receivest the Spirit of adoption, Eph. ii. 19 ; Gal. iv. 6. He gave thee life eternal, when he gave thee knowledge of himself, and of his Son, John xvii. 3. And will he now take from thee the kingdom which he hath given thee ? Thou wast once his enemy, and he hath received thee already into his favour, and reconciled thee to himself ; and will he not then receive thee to his glory ? Rom. v. 8-11, " God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." And when we have peace with God, being justified by faith (Rom. v. 1), why should we doubt whether he will receive us ? The great impediments and cause of fear are now removed : unpardoned sin is taken away, our debt is discharged. We have a sufficient answer against all that can be alleged to the prejudice of our souls : yea, it is Christ himself that answereth for us ; it is he that justifieth, who then shall condemn us ? Will he not justify those at last whom he hath here justified ? Or will he justify us, and yet not receive us ? That were both to justify and condemn us.

Depart, then, in peace, O fearful soul ; thou fallest into his hands that hath justified thee by his blood ; will he deny thee the inheritance of which he himself hath made thee heir, yea, a joint-heir with himself ? Rom. viii. 17. Will he deprive thee of thy birthright, who himself begot thee of the incorruptible seed ? If he would not have received thee to glory, he would not have drawn thee to himself, and have blotted out thine iniquities, and received thee by reconciling grace. Many a time he hath received the secret petitions, complaints, and groans which thou hast poured out before him ; and hath given thee access with boldness

to his throne of grace, when thou couldst not have access to man; and he hath taken thee up, when man hath cast thee off. Surely he that received thee so readily in thy distress, will not now at last repent him of his love. As Ma-noah's wife said, "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things," Judg. xiii. 23. He hath received thee into his church, and entertained thee with the delights and fatness of his house (Psal. xxxvi. 8), and bid thee welcome to his table, and feasted thee with his body and his blood, and communicated in these his quickening Spirit; and will he then disown thee, and refuse thee, when thou drawest nearer him, and art cast upon him for thy final doom? After so many receptions in the way of grace, dost thou yet doubt of his receiving you.

9. Consider how nearly thou art related to him in this state of grace; thou art his child, and hath he not the bowels of a father? When thou didst ask bread, he was not used to give thee a stone; and will he give thee hell, when thou askest but the entertainment in heaven, which he hath promised thee? Thou art his friend (John xv. 14, 15), and will he not receive his friends? Thou art his spouse, betrothed to him the very day when thou consentedst to his covenant; and where then shouldst thou live but with him? Thou art a member of his body, of his flesh and bone, Eph. v. 30; and no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church, verse 29: as he came down in flesh to be a suitor to thee, so he caused thee to let go all for him; and will he now forsake thee? Suspect it not, but quietly resign thy soul into his hands, and say, Lord, take this soul that pleads relation to thee; it is the voice of thy child that crieth to thee; the name of a father, which thou hast assumed towards me, is my encouragement. When thou didst call us out of the world unto thee, thou saidst, I will receive you, and I will be a father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. O our Father, which art in

heaven, shut not out thy children, the children of thy love and promise. The compassion that thou hast put into man engageth him to relieve a neighbour, yea, an enemy, much more to entertain a child; our children and our friends dare trust themselves upon our kindness and fidelity, and fear not that we will reject them in their distress, or destroy them, though they do sometimes offend us: our kindness is cruelty in comparison of thine; our love deserveth not the name of love in comparison of thy most precious love. Thine is the love of God, who is love itself, 1 John iv. 8, 16; and who is the God of love, 2 Cor. i. 13, 11; and is answerable to thine omnipotency, omniscience, and other attributes: but ours is the love of frail and finite sinful men. As we may pray to thee to forgive us our trespasses, for we also forgive those that have trespassed against us; so we may pray to thee to receive us, though we have offended thee, for even we receive those that have offended us. Hath thy love unto thine own its breadth, and length, and height, and depth; and is it such as passeth knowledge? Eph. iii. 17-19. And yet canst thou exclude thine own, and shut them out that cry unto thee? Can that love, which washed me and took me home when I lay wallowing in my blood, reject me, when it hath so far recovered me? Can that love now thrust me out of heaven, that lately fetched me from the gates of hell, and placed me among thy saints? "Whom thou lovest, thou lovest to the end," John xiii. 1. "Thou art not as man, that thou shouldst repent," Numb. xxiii. 19. "With thee is no variableness, or shadow of turning," Jam. i. 17. If yesterday thou so freely lovedst me as to adopt me for thy child, thou wilt not to-day refuse me, and cast me into hell. Receive, Lord Jesus, a member of thy body; a weak one, indeed, but yet a member, and needeth the more thy tenderness and compassion, who hast taught us not to cast out our infants, because they are small and weak. "We have forsaken all to cleave unto thee, that we might with thee be one flesh and spirit," Eph. v. 31; 1 Cor. vi. 17. O cut not off, and cast not out, thy members that are ingrafted into thee. "Thou hast dwelt in me

here by faith, and shall I not now dwell with thee?" Eph. iii. 17. Thou hast prayed to the Father, that we may be one in thee, and may be with thee to behold thy glory, John xvii. 20-24; and wilt thou deny to receive me to that glory, who pray but for what thou hast prayed to thy Father? Death maketh no separation between thee and thy members; it dissolveth not the union of souls with thee, though it separate them from the flesh; and shall a part of thyself be rejected and condemned?

10. Consider that Christ hath sealed thee up unto salvation, and given thee the earnest of his Spirit; and therefore will certainly receive thee, 2 Cor. i. 22; v. 5; Eph. i. 13, 14; iv. 30. Say, therefore, to him, Behold, Lord, thy mark, thy seal, thine earnest: flesh and blood did not illuminate and renew me; thy Spirit which thou hast given me is my witness that I am thine, Rom. viii. 16. And wilt thou disown and refuse the soul that thou hast sealed?

11. Consider that he that hath given thee a heavenly mind, will certainly receive thee into heaven. If thy treasure were not there, thy heart would never have been there, Matt. vi. 21. Thy weak desires do shew what he intends thee for; he kindled not those desires in vain. Thy love to him (though too small) is a certain proof that he intends not to reject thee; it cannot be that God can damn, or Christ refuse, a soul that doth sincerely love him: he that loveth, "dwelleth in God, and God in him," 1 John iv. 15, 16. And shall he not then dwell with God for ever? God fit-teth the nature of every creature to its use, and agreeably to the element in which they dwell; and, therefore, when he gave thee the heavenly nature (though but in weak beginnings), it shewed his will to make thee an inhabitant of heaven.

Say, therefore, to him, O Lord, I had never loved thee if thou hadst not begun and loved me first; I had not minded thee, or desired after thee, if thou hadst not kindled these desires: it cannot be that thy grace itself should be a deceit and misery, and intended but to tantalize us; and

that thou hast set thy servants' souls on longing for that which thou wilt never give them. Thou wouldst not have given me the wedding-garment, when thou didst invite me, if thou hadst meant to keep me out: even the grain of mustard-seed which thou sowedst in my heart, was a kind of promise of the happiness to which it tendeth. Indeed I have loved thee so little, that I am ashamed of myself, and confess my cold indifferency deserves thy wrath; but that I love thee, and desire thee, is thy gift, which signifieth the higher satisfying gift: though I am cold and dull, my eyes are towards thee; it is thee that I mean when I can but groan: it is long since I have bid this world away; it shall not be my home or portion: O perfect what thou hast begun; this is not the time or place of my perfection; and though my life be now hid with thee in God, when thou appearest, let me appear with thee in glory, Col. iii. 4. And, in the meantime, let this soul enjoy its part that appeareth before thee; give me what thou hast caused me to love, and then I shall more perfectly love thee, when my thirst is satisfied, and the water which thou hast given me shall spring up to everlasting life, John iv. 14.

12. Consider, also, that he that hath engaged thee to seek first his kingdom, is engaged to give it them that do sincerely seek it. He called thee off the pursuit of vanity when thou wast following the pleasures and profits of the world; and he called thee to labour for the food that perisheth not, but endureth to everlasting life, John vi. 27. Since then it hath been thy care and business (notwithstanding all thine imperfections), to seek and serve him, to please and honour him, and so to run that thou mightest obtain.

Say, then, Though my sins deserve thy wrath, and nothing that I have done deserve thy favour, yet godliness hath thy promise of the life to come; and thou hast said, that "he that seeks shall find," Matt. vii. 7, 8. O now let me find the kingdom that I have sought, and sought by thy encouragement and help: it cannot be that any should have cause to repent of serving thee, or suffer disappointment that trusts upon thee. My labour for the world was lost and

vain, but thou didst engage me to be steadfast and abound in thy work, on this account, that my labour should not be in vain, 1 Cor. xv. 58. Now give the full and final answer unto all my prayers: now that I have done the fight, and finished my course, let me find the crown of righteousness which thy mercy hath laid up, 2 Tim. iv. 8. O crown thy graces, and with thy greatest mercies recompense and perfect thy preparatory mercies, and let me be received to thy glory, who have been guided by thy counsel, Psal. lxxiii. 24.

13. Consider that Christ hath already received millions of souls, and never was unfaithful unto any. There are now with him the spirits of the just made perfect, that in this life were imperfect as well as you. Why, then, should you not comfortably trust him with your souls? and say, Lord, thou art the common salvation and refuge of thy saints; both strong and weak, even all that are given thee by the Father, shall come to thee, and those that come thou wilt in no wise cast out. Thousands have been entertained by thee that were unworthy in themselves, as well as I. It is few of thy members that are now on earth, in comparison of those that are with thee in heaven. Admit me, Lord, into the new Jerusalem: thou wilt have thy house to be filled; O, take my spirit into the number of those blessed ones that shall come from east, west, north, and south, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom; that we may, together with eternal joys, give thanks and praise to thee that hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.

14. Consider that it is the will of the Father himself that we should be glorified. He therefore gave us to his Son, and gave his Son for us, to be our Saviour, "That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16, 17. All our salvation is the product of his love, Eph. ii. 4; John vi. 37. John xvi. 26, 27, "I say not that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me," &c. John xiv. 21, "He that loveth me shall be loved of my

Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."

Say, therefore, with our dying Lord, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." By thy Son, who is the way, the truth, and the life, I come to thee, John xiv. 6. "Fullness of joy is in thy presence, and everlasting pleasures at thy right hand," Psal. xvi. 11. Thy love redeemed me, renewed and preserved me; O now receive me to the fullness of thy love. This was thy will in sending thy Son, that of all that thou gavest him he should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. O let not now this soul be lost that is passing to thee through the straits of death. I had never come unto thy Son, if thou hadst not drawn me, and if I had not heard and learned of thee, John vi. 44, 45: I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast revealed to me, a babe, an idiot, the blessed mysteries of thy kingdom, Luke x. 21; Acts iv. 13. O now as the veil of flesh must be withdrawn, and my soul be parted from this body, withdraw the veil of thy displeasure, and shew thy servant the glory of thy presence: that he that hath seen thee but as in a glass, may see thee now with open face; and when my earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, let me inhabit thy building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, 2 Cor. v. 1.

15. Lastly, Consider that God hath designed the everlasting glory of his name, and the pleasing of his blessed will, in our salvation; and the Son must triumph in the perfection of his conquest of sin and Satan, and in the perfecting of our redemption; and, doubtless, he will not lose his Father's glory and his own. Say, then, with confidence, I resign my soul to thee, O Lord, who hast called and chosen me, that thou mightest make known the riches of thy glory on me, as a vessel of mercy prepared unto glory, Rom. ix. 23. Thou hast predestinated me to the adoption of thy child by Christ unto thyself, to the praise of the glory of thy grace, wherein thou hast made me accepted in thy Beloved, Eph. i. 5, 6, 11, 12. Receive me now to the glory

which thou hast prepared for us, Matt. xxv. 34. The hour is at hand ; Lord, glorify thy poor adopted child, that he may for ever glorify thee, John xvii. 1. It is thy promise to glorify those whom thou dost justify, Rom. viii. 30. As "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ" (Rom. viii. 1), so now let him present me faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy ; and to thee "the only wise God our Saviour, be the glory, majesty, dominion, and power for evermore. Amen." Jude 24, 25.

What now remaineth, but that we all set ourselves to learn this sweet and necessary task, that we may joyfully perform it in the hour of our extremity ; even to recommend our departing souls to Christ, with confidence that he will receive them. It is a lesson not easy to be learned ; for faith is weak, and doubts and fears will easily arise, and nature will be loth to think of dying ; and we that have so much offended Christ, and lived so strangely to him, and been entangled in too much familiarity with the world, shall be apt to shrink when we should joyfully trust him with our departing souls. O, therefore, now set yourselves to overcome these difficulties in time. You know we are all ready to depart ; it is time this last important work were thoroughly learned, that our death may be both safe and comfortable.

There are divers other uses of this doctrine, that I should have urged upon you, had there been time. As, 1. If Christ will receive your departing souls, then fear not death, but long for this heavenly entertainment.

2. Then do not sin for fear of them that can but kill the body, and send the soul to Christ.

3. Then think not the righteous unhappy because they are cast off by the world ; neither be too much troubled at it yourselves when it comes to be your case ; but remember that Christ will not forsake you, and that none can hinder him from the receiving of your souls. No malice nor slanders can follow you so far as by defamation to make your justifier condemn you.

4. If you may trust him with your souls, then trust him with your friends, your children that you must leave behind,

with all your concernments and affairs : and trust him with his gospel and his church ; for they are all his own, and he will prevail to the accomplishment of his blessed pleasure.

But, 5. I shall only add that use which the sad occasion of our meeting doth bespeak. What cause have we now to mix our sorrows for our deceased friend, with the joys of faith for her felicity ! We have left the body to the earth, and that is our lawful sorrow, for it is the fruit of sin ; but her spirit is received by Jesus Christ, and that must be our joy, if we will behave ourselves as true believers. If we can suffer with her, should we not rejoice also with her ? And if the joy be far greater to the soul with Christ, than the ruined state of the body can be lamentable, it is but reason that our joy should be greater for her joy, than our sorrow for the dissolution of the flesh. We that should not much lament the passage of a friend beyond the seas, if it were to be advanced to a kingdom, should less lament the passage of a soul to Christ, if it were not for the remnant of our woeful unbelief.

She is arrived at the everlasting rest, where the burden of corruption, the contradictions of the flesh, the molestations of the tempter, the troubles of the world, and the injuries of malicious men, are all kept out, and shall never more disturb her peace. She hath left us in these storms, who have more cause to weep for ourselves, and for our children, that have yet so much to do and suffer, and so many dangers to pass through, than for the souls that are at rest with Christ. We are capable of no higher hopes than to attain that state of blessedness which her soul possesseth ; and shall we make that the matter of our lamentation as to her, which we make the matter of our hopes as to ourselves ? Do we labour earnestly to come thither, and yet lament that she is there ? You will say, it is not because she is clothed upon with the house from heaven, but that she is unclothed of the flesh : but is there any other passage than death into immortality ? Must we not be unclothed before the garments of glory can be put on ? She bemoaneth not her own dissolved body ; the glorified

soul can easily bear the corruption of the flesh ; and if you saw but what the soul enjoyeth, you would be like-minded, and be moderate in your griefs. Love not yourselves so as to be unjust and unmerciful in your desires to your friends. Let Satan desire to keep them out of heaven, but do not you desire it. You may desire your own good, but not so as to deprive your friends of theirs ; yea, of a greater good, that you may have a lesser by it. And if it be their company that you desire, in reason you should be glad that they are gone to dwell where you must dwell for ever, and therefore may for ever have their company ; had they staid on earth you would have had their company but a little while, because you must make so short a stay yourselves. Let them therefore begin their journey before you ; and grudge not that they are first at home, as long as you expect to find them there. In the mean time he that called them from you hath not left you comfortless ; he is with you himself, who is better than a mother, or than ten thousand friends : when grief or negligence hindereth you from observing him, yet he is with you, and holdeth you up, and tenderly provideth for you : though turbulent passions injuriously question all his love, and cause you to give him unmannerly and unthankful words, yet still he beareth with you, and forgiveth all, and doth not forsake you for your peevishness and weakness, because you are his children ; and he knoweth that you mean not to forsake him. Rebuke your passions, and calm your minds ; reclaim your thoughts, and cast away the bitterness of suspicious, quarrelsome unbelief ; and then you may perceive the presence of your dearest Friend and Lord, who is enough for you, though you had no other friend. Without him all the friends on earth would be but silly comforters, and leave you as at the gates of hell ; without him all the angels and saints in heaven would never make it a heaven to you. Grieve not too much that one of your candles is put out while you have the sun ; or if indeed it be not day with any of you, or the sun be clouded or eclipsed, let that rather be the matter of your grief ; find out the cause, and presently

submit and seek reconciliation: or if you are deprived of this light, because you are yet asleep in sin, hearken to his call, and rub your eyes: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light," Eph. v. 14. "Knowing that it is now high time to awake out of sleep, our salvation being nearer than when we first believed: the night is far spent, the day of eternal light is even at hand; cast off therefore the works of darkness, and put on all the armour of light; walk honestly and decently as in the day," Rom. xiii. 11-14. And whatever you do, make sure of the Friend that never dieth, and never shall be separated from you; and when you die will certainly receive the souls which you commend unto him.

And here, though contrary to my custom, I shall make some more particular mention of our deceased friend on several accounts. 1. In prosecution of this use that now we are upon, that you may see in the evidences of her happiness how little cause you have to indulge extraordinary grief on her account; and how much cause to moderate your sense of our loss, with the sense of her felicity. 2. That you may have the benefit of her example for your imitation, especially her children that are bound to observe the holy actions as well as the instructions of a mother. 3. For the honour of Christ, and his grace, and his servant: for as God hath promised to honour those that honour him (1 Sam. ii. 30), and Christ hath said, "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour," John xii. 26; so I know Christ will not take it ill to be honoured in his members, and to have his ministers subserve him in so excellent a work: it is a very considerable part of the love or hatred, honour or dishonour, that Christ hath in the world, which he receiveth as he appeareth in his followers. He that will not see a cup of cold water given to one of them go unrewarded, and will tell those at the last day that did or did not visit and relieve them, that they did or did it not to him, will now expect it from me as my duty to give him the honour of his graces in his deceased servant; and I doubt not will accordingly accept it, when it is no other indeed than his own

honour that is my end, and nothing but the words of truth and soberness shall be the means.

And here I shall make so great a transition as shall retain my discourse in the narrow compass of the time in which she lived near me, and under my care, and in my familiar acquaintance, omitting all the rest of her life, that none may say I speak but by hearsay of things which I am uncertain of; and I will confine it also to those special gifts and graces in which she was eminent, that I may not take you up with a description of a Christian as such, and tell you only of that good which she held but in common with all other Christians. And if any thing that I shall say were unknown to any reader that knew her, let them know that it is because they knew her but distantly, imperfectly, or by reports; and that my advantage of near acquaintance did give me a just assurance of what I say.

The graces which I discerned to be eminent in her were these. 1. She was eminent in her contempt of the pride, and pomp, and pleasure, and vanity of the world; and in her great averseness to all these, she had an honest impatience of the life which is common among the rich and vain-glorious in the world: voluptuousness and sensuality, excess of drinking, cards and dice, she could not endure, whatever names of good house-keeping or seemly deportment they borrowed for a mask. In her apparel she went below the garb of others of her rank; indeed in such plainness as did not notify her degree; but yet in such a grave and decent habit as notified her sobriety and humility. She was a stranger to pastimes, and no companion for time-wasters; as knowing that persons so near eternity, that have so short a life, and so great a work, have no time to spare. Accordingly, in her latter days she did, as those that grow wise by experience of the vanity of the world, retire from it, and cast it off before it cast off her: she betook herself to the society of a people that were low in the world, of humble, serious, upright lives, though such as had been wholly strangers to her; and among these poor inferior strangers she lived in contentment and quietness; desiring rather to con-

verse with those that would help her to redeem the time, in prayer and edifying conference, than with those that would grieve her by consuming it on their lusts.

2. She was very prudent in her converse and affairs (allowing for the passion of her sex and age), and so escaped much of the inconveniences that else in so great and manifold businesses would have overwhelmed her: as "a good man will guide his affairs with discretion," Psal. cxii. 5; so "discretion will preserve him, and understanding will keep him, to deliver him from the way of the evil man, who leaveth the paths of uprightness to walk in the way of darkness," Prov. ii. 11-13.

3. She was seriously religious, without partiality, or any taint of siding or faction, or holding the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ in respect of persons. I never heard her speak against men, or for men, as they differed in some small and tolerable things: she impartially heard any minister that was able, and godly, and sound in the main, and could bear with the weaknesses of ministers when they were faithful. Instead of owning the names or opinions of Prelatical, Presbyterian, Independent, or such like, she took up with the name and profession of a Christian, and loved a Christian as a Christian, without much respect to such different, tolerable opinions. Instead of troubling herself with needless scruples, and making up a religion of opinions and singularities, she studied faith and godliness; and lived upon the common certain truths, and well-known duties, which have been the old and beaten way, by which the universal church of Christ hath gone to heaven in former ages.

4. She was very impartial in her judgment about particular cases, being the same in judging of the case of a child and a stranger; and no interest of children, or other relations, could make her swerve from an equal judgment.

5. She very much preferred the spiritual welfare of her children before their temporal; looking on the former as the true felicity, and on the latter without it but as a pleasant, voluntary misery.

6. Since I was acquainted with her, I always found her

very ready to good works, according to her power. And when she hath seen a poor man come to me, that she conjectured solicited me for relief, she hath reprehended me for keeping the case to myself, and not inviting her to contribute ; and I could never discern that she thought any thing so well bestowed as that which relieved the necessities of the poor that were honest and industrious.

7. She had the wonderful mercy of a man-like, Christian, patient spirit, under all afflictions that did befall her ; and under the multitude of troublesome businesses, that would have even distracted an impatient mind. Though sudden anger was the sin that she much confessed herself, and therefore thought she wanted patience, yet I have oft wondered to see her bear up with the same alacrity and quietness, when Job's messengers have brought her the tidings that would have overwhelmed an impatient soul. When law-suits and the great afflictions of her children have assaulted her like successive waves, which I feared would have borne her into the deep, if not devoured all her peace, she sustained all as if no great considerable change had been made against her, having the same God and the same Christ, and promises, and hope, from which she fetched such real comfort and support as shewed a real, serious faith.

8. She was always apt to put a good interpretation upon God's providences ; like a right believer, that having the spirit of adoption, perceiveth fatherly love in all, she would not easily be persuaded that God meant her any harm : she was not apt to hearken to the enemy that accuseth God and his ways to man, as he accuseth man and his actions to God : she was none of those that are suspicious of God, and are still concluding death and ruin from all that he doth to them, and are gathering wrath from misinterpreted expressions of his love ; who weep because of the smoke before they can be warmed by the fire. Yet God is good to Israel ; and it shall go well with them that fear before him (Psal. lxxiii. 1 ; Eccles. viii. 12, 13), were her conclusions from the sharpest providences : she expected the morning in the darkest night, and judged not of the end by the beginning ;

but was always confident if she could but entitle God in the case that the issue would be good. She was not a murmurer against God, nor one that contended with her Maker; nor one that created calamity to herself by a self-troubling, unquiet mind: she patiently bore what God laid upon her, and made it not heavier by the additions of uncomfortable prognostics, and misgiving or repining thoughts. She had a great confidence in God, that he was doing good to her and hers in all; and where at present she saw any matter of grief, she much supported her soul with a belief that God would remove and overcome it in due time.

9. She was not troubled, that ever I decerned, with doubtings about her interest in Christ, and about her own justification and salvation; but whether she reached to assurance or not, she had confident apprehensions of the love of God, and quietly reposed her soul upon his grace. Yet not secure through presumption or self-esteem, but comforting herself in the Lord her God; by this means she spent those hours in a cheerful performance of her duty, which many spend in fruitless self-vexation for the failings of their duty, or in mere inquiries whether they have grace or not; and others spend in wrangling, perplexed controversies about the manner or circumstances of duty: and I believe that she had more comfort from God by way of reward upon her sincere obedience, while she referred her soul to him, and rested on him, than many have that more anxiously perplexed themselves about the discerning of their holiness, when they should be studying to be more holy, that it might discover itself. And by this means she was fit for praises and thanksgiving, and spent not her life in lamentations and complaints; and made not religion seem terrible to the ignorant, that judge of it by the faces and carriage of professors. She did not represent it to the world as a morose and melancholy temper, but as the rational creature's cheerful obedience to his Maker, actuated by the sense of the wonderful love that is manifested in the Redeemer, and by the hopes of the purchased and promised felicity in the blessed sight and fruition of God. And I

conjecture that her forementioned disposition to think well of God, and of his providences, together with her long and manifold experience (the great advantage of ancient, tried Christians), did much conduce to free her from doubtings and disquieting fears about her own sincerity and salvation; and I confess, if her life had not been answerable to her peace and confidence, I should not have thought the better, but the worse, of her condition; nothing being more lamentable than to make haste to hell, through a wilful confidence that the danger is past, and that they are in the way to heaven as well as the most sanctified.

10. Lastly, I esteemed it the height of her attainment that she never discovered any inordinate fears of death, but a cheerful readiness, willingness, and desire, to be dissolved, and be with Christ. This was her constant temper, both in health and sickness, as far as I was able to observe. She would be frequently expressing how little reason she had to be desirous of longer life, and how much reason to be willing to depart. Divers times in dangerous sickness I have been with her, and never discerned any considerable averseness, dejectedness, or fear. Many a time I have thought how great a mercy I should esteem it if I had attained that measure of fearless willingness to lay down this flesh, as she had attained. Many a one that can make light of wants, or threats, or scorns, or any ordinary troubles, cannot submit so quietly and willingly to death. Many a one that can go through the labours of religion, and condemn opposition, and easily give all they have to the poor, and bear imprisonments, banishment, or contempt, can never overcome the fears of death. So far, even the father of lies spake truth; "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life," Job ii. 4. I took it, therefore, for a high attainment and extraordinary mercy to our deceased friend, that the king of terrors was not terrible to her. Though I doubt not but somewhat of averseness and fear is so rooted in nature's self-preserving principle, as that it is almost inseparable, yet in her I never discerned any troublesome appearances of it. When I first came to her

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in the beginning of her last sickness, she suddenly passed the sentence of death upon herself, without any shew of fear or trouble, when to us the disease appeared not to be great. But when the disease increased, her pains were so little, and the effect of the fever was so much in her head, that, after this, she seemed not to esteem it mortal, being not sensible of her case and danger: and so, as she lived without the fears of death, she seemed to us to die without them. God, by the nature of her disease, removing death as out of her sight, when she came to that weakness, in which else the encounter was like to have been sharper than ever it was before. And thus, in one of the weaker sex, God hath shewed us that it is possible to live in holy confidence, and peace, and quietness of mind, without distressing griefs or fears, even in the midst of a troublesome world, and of vexatious businesses, and with the afflictions of her dearest relations almost continually before her: and that our quiet or disquiet, our peace or trouble, dependeth more upon our inward strength and temper than upon our outward state, occasions, or provocations; and that it is more in our hands than of any or all our friends and enemies, whether we shall have a comfortable or uncomfortable life.

What remaineth now, but that all we that survive, especially you that are her children, do follow her as she followed Christ? Though the word of God be your sufficient rule, and the example of Christ be your perfect pattern, yet as the instructions, so the example of a parent must be a weighty motive to quicken and engage you to your duty; and will else be a great aggravation of your sin. A holy child of unholy parents doth no more than his necessary duty; because whatever parents are, he hath a holy God: but an unholy child of holy parents is inexcusable in sin, and deplorably miserable, as forsaking the doctrine and pattern both of their Creator and their progenitors, whom nature engageth them to observe; and it will be an aggravation of their deserved misery to have their parents witness against them, that they taught them, and they would not learn; and went before them in a holy life, but they would not follow

them. "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother; for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck," Prov. i. 8, 9. Read and consider Prov. xxx. 17; xv. 20; xxiii. 22, 25. Sins against parents have a special curse affixed to them in this life, as the case of Ham sheweth; and the due observance and honouring of parents hath a special promise of temporal blessings, as the fifth commandment sheweth. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for it is right: honour thy father and thy mother (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with thee, and thou mayst live long on the earth," Eph. vi. 1-3. The histories of all ages are so full of the instances of God's judgments, in this life, upon five sorts of sinners, as may do much to convince an atheist of the government and special providence of God; that is, upon persecutors, murderers, sacrilegious, false witnesses (especially by perjury), and abusers and dishonourers of parents. And the great honour that is due to parents when they are dead, is to give just honour to their names, and to obey their precepts, and imitate their good examples. It is the high commendation of the Rechabites, that they strictly kept the precepts of their father, even in a thing indifferent, a mode of living; not to drink wine, or build houses, but dwell in tents: and God annexeth this notable blessing, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you: therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever," Jer. xxxv. 6, 7, 18, 19. But, especially in the great duties of religion, where parents do but deliver the mind of God, and use their authority to procure obedience to divine authority, and where the matter itself is necessary to our salvation, the obligation to obedience and imitation is most indispensable; and disobedience is an aggravated iniquity, and the notorious brand of infelicity, and prognostic of ensuing woe; the

ungodly children of godly parents being the most deplorable, unhappy, inexcusable persons in the world (if they hold on.)

There is yet another doctrine that I should speak to.

Doct. 7. Prayer in general, and this prayer in particular, that Christ will receive our departing souls, is a most suitable conclusion of all the actions of a Christian's life.

Prayer is the breath of a Christian's life: it is his work and highest converse, and therefore fittest to be the concluding action of his life, that it may reach the end at which he aimed. We have need of prayer all our lives, because we have need of God, and need of his manifold and continued grace. But in our last extremity we have a special need. Though sloth is apt to seize upon us, while prosperity hindereth the sense of our necessities, and health persuadeth us that time is not near its journey's end, yet it is high time to pray with redoubled fervour and importunity when we see that we are near our last. When we find that we have no more time to pray, but must now speak our last for our immortal souls, and must at once say all that we have to say, and shall never have a hearing more. Oh, then, to be unable to pray, or to be faithless, and heartless, and hopeless in our prayers, would be a calamity beyond expression.

Yet I know, for ordinary observation tells it us, that many truly gracious persons may accidentally be indisposed and disabled to pray when they are near to death. If the disease be such as doth disturb the brain, or take them up with violence of pain, or overwhelm the mind by perturbation of the passions, or abuse the imagination, or notably waste and debilitate the spirits, it cannot be expected that a body thus disabled should serve the soul in this or any other duty. But still the praying habit doth remain, though a distempered body do forbid the exercise. The habitual desires of the soul are there; and it is those that are the soul of prayer.

But this should move us to pray while we have time, and while our bodies have strength, and our spirits have vigour and alacrity to serve us, seeing we are so uncertain of bodily

disposition and capacity so near our end. O pray, and pray with all your hearts, before any fever or delirium overthrow your understandings or your memories; before your thoughts are all commanded to attend your pains, and before your decayed spirits fail you, and deny their necessary service to your suits; and before the apprehensions of your speedy approach to the presence of the most holy God, and your entrance upon an endless state, do amaze, confound, and overwhelm your souls with fear and perturbation. O Christians! what folly, what sin and shame is it to us, that now while we have time to pray, and leave to pray, and helps to pray, and have no such disturbing hindrances, we should yet want hearts, and have no mind, no life and fervour for so great a work! O pray now, lest you are unable to pray then; and if you are then hindered but by such bodily indisposition, God will understand your habitual desires, and your groans, and take it as if you had actually prayed. Pray now, that so you may be acquainted with the God that then you must fly unto for mercy, and may not be strangers to him, or unto prayer; and that he may not find then that your prayers are but the expression of your fears, and not of your love, and are constrained, and not voluntary motions unto God: pray now in preparation to your dying prayers. Oh what a terrible thing it is to be to learn to pray in that hour of extremity, and to have then no principle to pray by, but natural self-love, which every thief hath at the gallows! To be then without the spirit of prayer, when without it there cannot an acceptable word or groan be uttered; and when the rejection of our suits and person will be the prologue to the final judicial rejection, and will be a distress so grievous as presumptuous souls will not believe, till sad experience become their tutor. Can you imagine that you shall then at last be taught the art of acceptable prayer merely by horror, and the natural sense of pain and danger, as seamen in a storm, or a malefactor by the rack, when in your health and leisure you will not be persuaded to the daily use of serious prayer, but number yourselves with the families that are under the wrath of the

Almighty, being such as call not on his name, Jer. x. 25 ; Psalm lxxix. 6.

Indeed, there are many prayers must go before, or else this prayer, " Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," will be in vain, when you would be loth to find it so. You must first pray for renewing, sanctifying grace, for the death of sin, and the pardon of sin, for a holy life, and a heavenly mind, for obedience, patience, and perseverance ; and if you obtain not these, there is no hope that Jesus Christ should receive your spirits, that never received his sanctifying Spirit.

How sad is it to observe that those that have most need of prayer, have least mind to pray, as being least sensible of their needs ! Yea, that those that are the next step to the state of devils, and have as much need of prayer as any miserable souls on earth, do yet deride it, and hate those that seriously and fervently perform it ; a man of prayer being the most common object of their malicious reproach and scorn. O miserable Cainites, that hate their brethren for offering more acceptable sacrifice than their own ! Little do they know how much of the very satanical nature is in that malice, and in those reproachful scorns. And little do they know how near they are to the curse and desperation of Cain, and with what horror they shall cry out, " My punishment is greater than I can bear," Gen. iv. 11, 13. If God and good men condemn you for your lip-service, and heartless devotions, and ungodly lives, will you therefore hate the holy nature and better lives of those that judge you, when you should hate your own ungodliness and hypocrisy ? Hear what God said to the leader of your sect, " Why art thou wroth ? and why is thy countenance fallen ? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted ? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door," Gen. iv. 6. Have you not as much need to pray as those that you hate and reproach for praying ? Have you not as much need to be oft and earnest in prayer as they ? Must Christ himself spend whole nights in prayer (Luke vi. 12), and shall an ignorant, sensual, hardened sinner think he hath no need of it, though he be un-

converted, unjustified, unready to die, and almost past the opportunity of praying? O miserable men, that shortly would cry and roar in the anguish of their souls, and yet will not pray while there is time and room for prayer! Their Judge is willing now to hear them, and now they have nothing but hypocritical, lifeless words to speak! Praying is now a wearisome, tedious, and unpleasant thing to them, that shortly would be glad if the most heart-tearing lamentations could prevail for the crumbs and drops of that mercy which they thus despise, Luke xvi. 24. Of all men in the world it ill becomes one in so deep necessities and dangers to be prayerless.

But for you, Christians, that are daily exercised in this holy converse with your Maker, hold on, and grow not strange to heaven, and let not your holy desires be extinguished for want of excitation. Prayer is your ascent to heaven; your departure from a vexatious world to treat with God for your salvation; your retirement from a world of dangers into the impregnable fortress where you are safe, and from vanity unto felicity, and from troubles unto rest, which, though you cannot come so near, nor enjoy so fully and delightfully, as hereafter you shall do, yet thus do you make your approaches to it, and thus do you secure your future full fruition of it. And let them all scoff at hearty, fervent prayer as long as they will, yet prayer shall do that with God for you which health, and wealth, and dignity, and honour, and carnal pleasures, and all the world shall never do for one of them. And though they neglect and vilify it now, yet the hour is near when they will be fain to scramble and bungle at it themselves; and the face of death will better teach them the use of prayer, than our doctrine and example now can do. A departing soul will not easily be prayerless, nor easily be content with sleepy prayers; but, alas! it is not every prayer that hath some fervency from the power of fear that shall succeed. Many a thousand may perish for ever that have prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." But the soul that breatheth after Christ, and is weary of sinning, and hath long been pressing toward the mark, may

receive encouragement for his last petitions, from the bent and success of all the foregoing prayers of his life. Believe it, Christians, you cannot be so ready to beg of Christ to receive your souls, as he is ready and willing to receive them. As you come praying, therefore, into the world of grace, go praying out of it into the world of glory. It is not a work that you were never used to, though you have had lamented backwardness, and coldness, and omissions. It is not to a God that you were never with before; as you know whom you have believed, so you may know to whom you pray. It is indeed a most important suit to beg for the receiving of a departed soul; but it is put up to him to whom it properly doth belong, and to him that hath encouraged you by answering many a former prayer with that mercy which was the earnest of this, and it is to him that loveth souls much better than any soul can love itself. O live in prayer, and die in prayer, and do not, as the graceless, witless world, despise prayer while they live, and then think a Lord, have mercy on me, shall prove enough to pass them into heaven. Mark their statues and monuments in the churches, whether they be not made kneeling and lifting up the hands, to tell you that all will be forced to pray, or to approve of prayer, at their death, whatever they say against it in their life. O pray, and wait but a little longer, and all your danger will be past, and you are safe for ever! Keep up your hands a little longer, till you shall end your conflict with the last enemy, and shall pass from prayer to everlasting praise.

SHORT MEDITATIONS

ON

ROMANS v. 1-5;

OF THE SHEDDING ABROAD GOD'S LOVE ON THE HEART BY THE HOLY GHOST.

EXPERIENCE of the want of this effusion of God's love, and some small taste of its sweetness, make me think the thoughts of this very suitable to one expecting death.

The words contain a golden chain of highest blessings on all true Christians.

I. They are supposed to have faith, that is, both a general trust in God's revelations and grace, and a special trust in Jesus Christ, as given by the father's love to be the Redeemer, to justify, sanctify, and glorify his people. I have oft proved this justifying faith to be no less than our unfeigned taking Christ for our Saviour, and becoming true Christians, according to the tenor of the baptismal covenant. As to the acts, it is formally trust—one in three; the understanding's assenting trust, the will's consenting trust, and the executive power's practical, venturing, obeying trust.

II. All true believers are justified; even all that consent to the baptismal covenant, and choose God to be their God, and Christ to be their Saviour, and the Holy Ghost to be their Sanctifier, and give up themselves to him by true resolution, as their only ruler, hope, and happiness; though this be done with so great weakness, as endeth not all doubts, nor quieteth the mind.

To be justified is not to be accounted such as have no sin, but, 1. To be made such by pardon through Christ's merits, and by true faith, as God will take by special love and favour unto life. 2. To be accounted such by God. 3. To be virtually sentenced such by the law of grace and faith, and to be just in law sense. 4. At last to be judged such by public sentence. 5. And to be used as such.

Not justified by the law of innocency, or of Moses, but by Christ's law of grace.

Not justified perfectly till the time of perfection. Much punishment on soul and body is yet to be taken off, and and more sins daily to be pardoned, and we, before the world, to be sentenced as just to life everlasting.

III. The justified have peace with God. They are reconciled, and in a state of love and friendship. It signifieth mutual peace, but with great inequality. God's love and favour to us is the stable, constant part. Our consent also, and acceptance of his terms of peace, is constant in its truth : but our sense of God's love, which is the peace possessed by the soul, is weak and inconstant, and too oft quite lost or obscured by ignorance, mistake, and fear. But it must be known that this is a diseased state, unnatural to the believer as such ; as it is unnatural for a woman married to a faithful husband, to lie in terror, thinking that he will kill her, or doth not love her ; or for a child to think the same of a loving father. Faith, of its own nature, tendeth to the soul's peace and joy, in the sense of God's love. And how is Christ offered to us, but as a Saviour, to bring us by grace to glory ? And he that accepteth him as such, whereby he is justified, doth sure believe that he is offered as such ; for none can accept what he thinks not to be offered. And this implieth some hope, at least, that Christ will be such to us ; and did faith work strongly and kindly, its effect would be a constant, joyful state of soul, as pleasant health and mirth are to our natures. All our distrustful fears and griefs, and disquietness of soul, are for want of more faith, as sickness and pain are for the want of vital causes of health.

IV. This peace with God is only "through our Lord Jesus Christ." Though it be a vain dream to think by justifying faith is meant Christ only and not faith, yet it is no other faith but the foresaid believing trust on Christ. Therefore, as faith is our part, so it supposeth Christ, and all the works of his office, and righteousness, on his part, as its object. Christ is the purchasing cause; but our trust and acceptance is that which is pleasing to God, and chosen by him to be our part, without innocency, or keeping the Jewish law.

Since man once sinned, God's justice and man's conscience tell us, that we are unfit for God's acceptance or communion immediately, but must have a suitable mediator. Oh! blessed be God for this suitable Mediator. Without him I dare not pray, I cannot hope, I dare not die; God would else frown me away to misery. All the hope of pardon and salvation that I have; all the access to God, and the mercies and deliverances that I have received, have been by this Author and finisher of our faith. Into his conducting hands I give my soul; and into his preserving hands both soul and body; and into his receiving hands I commend my departing soul.

V. Ver. 2. "By whom we have access by faith unto this grace wherein we stand;" that is, into this state of blessed Christianity, peace with God, and the following blessings. As it is by marriage that a woman hath right to her husband's estate and honours, and by inheritance that a child comes to his father's maintenance and land. This is no diminution to God's love. To say it is all by Christ, is not to take it as ever the less from God the Father. It is more to give us Christ, and life in him, than to have given us life without a Christ (John iii. 16; 1 John v. 10—12.); as God is, nevertheless, the giver of light to the earth, for giving it by the sun. Second causes diminish not the honour of the first.

VI. "And rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Here is, 1. The beatifical object—"the glory of God." 2. The

beatifical act—"rejoice." 3. The mediate, causing act—"hope." All presupposing faith and justification.

1. The "glory of God" is that glorious appearance of God to man and angels, which maketh happy, 1. The mind by beholding it. 2. The will by loving it, and receiving the communications of love. 3. The executive powers by joyful praise, &c.

2. Though some foretastes are here, it is yet said to be hoped for; and we hope for that which is not seen. When faith is said to be that which we are justified or saved by, it includeth hope, though, more precisely taken, they are distinct. "We are saved by hope." The same word is oft translated "trust" and "hope;" and faith is trust. To trust Christ for salvation, includeth hoping that he will save us. But hope is denominated from the good hoped for, and faith from the cause by which we hope to obtain it.

Hope doth not necessarily imply either certainty or uncertainty. It may stand with both in various degrees.

3. Rejoicing is made by God the very naturally desired state of the soul. It is, when natural, the pleasant effluence of the spirits, or their state of health.

It is pleasure that is the spring or poise of all motion sensitive in the world. *Trahit sua quemque, voluptas.* Appetite, or will, is the active principle; and congruous, good or delectable, is the object. The world is undone by the seduction of false deceitful pleasure; and though we that made not ourselves are not so made for ourselves as that our pleasure or felicity in God should be so high in our desire as God himself, who is the ultimate object of our love: yet, seeing such an object he is, and the love of him (and received from him) is our felicity, these are never to be separated.

What have I to rejoice in, if this hoped-for glory be not my joy? All things else are dying to me; and God himself is not my felicity, as he afflicts me, nor as he giveth me the transitory gifts of nature, but as he is to be seen in glory. If this be not my joy, it is all but vanity. What, then,

should all my thoughts and labour aim at more, as to myself, than to hope for and foretaste this glory. No sin lieth heavier on me than my hopes of glory raise me to no higher joy; and that the great weakness of my faith appeareth by such dull thoughts of glory, or by withdrawing fears. Sure there is enough in the glory of God, soundly believed and hoped for, to make a man rejoice in pain and weakness, and to make him long to be with Christ. I live not according to the nature of Christianity, if I live not as in peace with God, and in the joyful hopes of promised glory.

VII. "Not only so, but we glory in tribulation." Glory is so transcendent, and tribulation so small and short, that an expectant of glory may well rejoice in bodily sufferings. It is tribulation for Christ and righteousness' sake that we are said to glory in: the rest, for our sins, it is well if we can improve and patiently bear. Yet in them we may rejoice in hope of glory, though we glory not of them. Oh! if all the painful, languid days, and nights, and years that I have had, as the fruit of my sin, had been sufferings for that which I am now hated and hunted for, even for preaching Christ when men forbid me, how joyfully might I undergo it: but yet, even here, approaching glory should be my joy. Alas! my groans and moans are too great, and my joy too little.

VIII. "Knowing that tribulation worketh patience." That which worketh patience is matter of joy: for patience doth us more good than tribulation can do hurt; why, then, do I groan so much under suffering, and so little study and exercise patience, and no more rejoice in the exercise thereof?

IX. "And patience, experience." It is manifold and profitable experience which patient suffering brings. It giveth us experience, as of nature's weakness, and the great need of faith; so of the truth of God's promises, the love and tenderness of Christ, the acceptance of our prayers; and the power of the Spirit's aid and grace. O what abundance of experiences of God and ourselves, and the vanity of crea-

tures, had we wanted, if we had not waited in a suffering state : alas ! how many experiences have I forgotten.

X. "And experience, hope." A bare promise should give us hope : but we are still distrustful of ourselves, and of all the clearest evidences, till experience help us, and set all home. Oh, what an advantage hath a Christian of great and long experience for his hope and joy ! And yet when notable experiences of God's providence are past and gone, an unbelieving heart is ready to question, whether the things came not by mere natural course ; and, like the Israelites in the wilderness, dangers and fears bear down even long and great experiences. This is my sin.

XI. "And hope maketh not ashamed." That is, true hope of what God hath promised shall never be disappointed. They that trust on deceitful creatures are deceived, and ashamed of their hope : for all men are liars, that is, untrusty ; but God is true, and ever faithful : O what a comfort is it that God commandeth me to trust him ! Sure such a command is a virtual promise, from him that cannot fail that trust which he commandeth. Lord, help me to trust thee in greatest dangers, and there to rest.

XII. "Because the love of God is shed abroad upon our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given to us." It is the love of God shed abroad on our hearts by the Holy Ghost which must make us rejoice in hope of the glory of God, even in tribulation.

Here I must consider, I. What is meant by the love of God. II. Why and how it is shed abroad on the heart by the Holy Ghost.

I. By the love of God is meant the effects of his love.
1. His special grace. 2. The pleasant gust or sense of it.

II. God's love thus shed on the heart, presupposeth it expressed in the gospel and providence, and contains all these particulars.

1. The sanctifying of the soul by renewing grace. This is the giving of the Spirit, as he is given to all true Christians.

2. Herein the Holy Ghost makes us perceive the exceeding desirableness of the love of God, and maketh us most desire it.

3. He giveth the soul some easing hope of the love of God.

4. He quieteth the doubts, and fears, and trouble of the soul.

5. He raiseth our hopes, by degrees, to confident assurance.

6. Then the thoughts of God's love are pleasant to the soul, and give it such delight as we feel in the love and fruition of our most valued and beloved friends.

7. The soul in this state is as unapt to be jealous of God, or to question his love, as a good child or wife to question the love of a parent or husband, or to hear any that speak evil of them.

8. This, then, becomes the habitual state of the soul, in all changes, to live in the delightful sense of the love of God, as we do live in pleasure with our dearest friends.

O blessed state, and first fruits of heaven! and happy are they that do attain it. And though lower degrees have their degree of happiness, yet how far short are such, in goodness, amiableness, and comfort, of those that are thus rich in grace.

This presupposeth, 1. Knowledge of God and the gospel. 2. True belief and hope. 3. A sincere and fruitful life. 4. Mortification as to idol worldly vanities. 5. A conviction of our sincerity in all this. 6. A conclusion that God doth love.

But yet it is somewhat above all this. A man may have all this in his mind and mouth, and yet want this gust of effused love upon his heart. These are the way to it, but not itself.

This is the greatest good on this side heaven; to which all wealth and honour, all fleshly pleasure and long life, all learning and knowledge, are unworthy to be once compared: briefly,

1. It is the flower and highest part of God's image on man.

2. It is the soul's true communion with God, and fruition of him, which carnal men deride: even as our eye hath communion with the sun, and the flourishing earth enjoys its reviving heats.

3. It is that which all lower grace doth tend to, as childhood doth to manhood: and what is a world of infants, comparatively, good for?

4. It is that which most properly answereth the design of redemption, and the wonders of God's love therein; and all the tenor of the gospel.

5. It is that which is most fully called the Spirit of God, or Christ in us: he hath lower works, but this is his great work, by which he possesseth us, as God's most pleasant habitation: "For we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of power and love, and a sound mind." (2 Tim. i. 7.)

6. It is only that which all men in general desire, I mean the only satisfying content and pleasure that man is capable of on earth. All men would have quieting and constant pleasure, and it is to be found in nothing else but the effused love of God.

7. It is that which will make every burden light, and all affliction easy: when the sense of God's love is still upon the soul, all pain and crosses will be but as blood-letting by the kindest physician to save the patient's life. God will not be suspected or grudged at in suffering; his love will sweeten all.

8. It will overcome abundance of temptations, which no men's wit, or learning, or knowledge of the words of Scripture, will overcome. No arguments will draw a loving child, or wife, from the parents, or husband, that they know doth love them. Love is the most powerful disputant.

9. It puts a mellow, pleasant sweetness into all our duties. When we hear the word, or receive the sacrament, it is to such a soul as pleasant food to the most healthful man; when we pray or praise God it comes from a comforted

heart, and excites and increaseth the comfort it comes from. Oh, who can be backward to draw near to God in prayer or meditation, who tasteth the sweetness of his love! This is religion indeed, and tells us what its life, and use, and glory is. This is true walking with God in the best degree. When the soul liveth in the taste of his love, the heart will be still with him, and that will be its pleasure. And God most delights in such a soul.

10. This is it that putteth the sweetest relish on all our mercies. Deny God's love, and you deny them all. If you taste not his love in them, you taste little more than a beast may taste; poor food and raiment is sweet, with the sense of the love of God. Had I more of this, I should lie down, and rise, and walk in pleasure and content. I could bear the loss of other things; and though nature will feel pains, I should have pleasure and peace in the midst of all my pains and groans. This is the white stone, the new name; no man well knoweth it who never felt it in himself.

1. There is no dying comfortably without this experienced taste of the love of God. This will draw up the desires of the soul; love tasted, casteth out fear: though God be holy and just, and judgment terrible, and hell intolerable, and the soul hath no distinct idea of its future state out of the body, and though we see not whither it is that we must go, the taste of God's love will make it go joyfully, as trusting him; as a child will go any whither in his father's power and hand.

But all the knowledge in the world without this quiets not a departing soul. A man may write as many books, and preach as many sermons of heaven, as I have done, and speak of it, and think of almost nothing else, and yet till the soul be sweetened and comforted with the love of God shed abroad on it by the Holy Ghost, death and the next life will be rather a man's fear than his desire. And the common fear of death which we see in the far greater part even of godly persons doth tell us, that though they may have saving desires and hopes, yet this sense of God's love on the heart is rare.

What wonder, then, if our language, our converse, our prayers, have too little savour of it, and in comparison of joyful believers' duties, be but like green apples to the mellow ones.

My God, I feel what it is that I want, and I perceive what it is that is most desirable: Oh, let not guilt be so far unpardoned as to deprive my soul of this greatest good, which thou hast commended to me, and commanded, and which in my languishing and pains I so much need! Did I beg for wealth or honour, I might have it to the loss of others. But thy love will make me more useful to all, and none will have the less for my enjoyment; for thou, Lord, art enough for all; even as none hath the less of the sunlight for my enjoying it. The least well-grounded hope of thy love is better than all the pleasures of the flesh; but without some pleasant sense of it, alas! what a withered, languishing thing is a soul! Thy loving-kindness is better than life; but if I taste it not, how shall I here rejoice in God, or bear my heavy burdens?

O let me not be a dishonour to thy family, where all have so great cause to honour thy bounty by their joy and hopes; nor, by a sad and fearful heart, tempt men to think that thy love is not real and satisfactory. I can easily believe and admire thy greatness and thy knowledge. Let it not be so hard to me to believe and taste thy goodness and thy love, which is as necessary to me.

If there be anything (as surely there is) in which the divine nature and spirit of adoption consisteth, as above all the art and notions of religion, which are but like to other acquired knowledge, sure it must be this holy appetite and habitual inclination of the soul to God, by way of love, which is bred by an internal sense of his loveliness, and loving inclination to man; which differenceth a Christian from other men, as a child differs towards his father, from strangers, or from common neighbours. Till the love of God be the very state and nature of the soul (working here towards his honour, interests, word, and servants), no man can say that he is God's habitation by the Spirit; and how the heart

will ever be thus habited, without believing God's love to us, it is hard to conceive.

Experience tells the world how strongly it constraineth persons to love one another, if they do but think that they are strongly beloved by one another. In the love that tends to marriage, if one that is inferior do but know that a person of far greater worth doth fervently love them, it almost puts a necessity and constraint on them for returns of love: nature can scarce choose but love in such a case. Love is the loadstone of love. A real taste of the love of God in saving souls by Christ and grace, is it that constraineth them to be holy; that is, to be devoted to that God in love.

III. But this must as necessarily be the work of the Holy Ghost, and can be no more done without him than the earth can be illuminated, and the vegetables live, without the sun. But all the approaches of the Holy Spirit suffice not to produce this great effect, and give us the divine, holy nature.

The same sunshine hath three different effects on its objects.

1. On most things, as houses, stones, earth, it causeth nothing but accidents of heat, colour, and motion.

2. On some things it causeth a seminal disposition to vegetable life, but not life itself.

3. In this disposed matter it causeth vegetable life itself.

So doth the Spirit of God, 1. Operate on millions but lifeless accidents, as the sun on a stone wall. 2. On others dispose and prepare them to divine life. 3. On others so disposed it effecteth the divine life itself, when holy love is turned into a habit like to nature.

That none but the Holy Ghost doth make this holy change is evident; for the effect cannot transcend the causes. 1. Nature alone is dark, and knoweth not the attractive amiableness of God till illuminated, nor can give us a satisfactory notice of God's special love to us.

2. Nature is guilty, and guilt breedeth fears of justice, and fear makes us become wild, and fly from God lest he should hurt us.

3. Nature is under penal sufferings already, and feeleth pain, fear, and many hurts, and foreseeth death, and under this is undisposed of itself to feel the pleasure of God's love.

4. Nature is corrupted and diverted to creature vanity, and its appetite goeth another way, and cannot cure itself, and make itself suitable to the amiableness of God.

5. God hateth wickedness and wicked men, and mere nature cannot secure us that we are saved from that enmity.

Diligence may do much to get religious knowledge, and words, and all that which I call the art of religion, and God may bless this as a preparation to holy life and love; but till the soul's appetite incline with desire to God and holiness, divine things will not sweetly relish.

And this is a great comfort to the thoughts of the sanctified, that certainly their holy appetite, desire, and complacency, is the work of the Holy Ghost. For, 1. This secureth them of the love of God, of which it is the proper token. 2. And it assureth them of their union with Christ, when they live because he liveth, even by the Spirit, which is his seal and pledge. 3. And it proveth both a future life and their title to it: for God maketh not all this preparation for it by his Spirit in vain.

But, alas! if it were not a work that hath great impediment, it would not be so rare in the world. What is it in us that keepeth the sun of love from so shining on us as to revive our souls into holy contentments and delight?

It must be supposed, 1. That all God's gifts are free, and that he giveth not to all alike; the wonderful variety of creatures proveth this. 2. The reasons of his differencing works are his own will, and inferior reasons are mostly unknown to us, of which he is not bound to give us an account.

3. But yet we see that God doth his works in a casual order, and one work prepareth for another; and he maketh variety of capacities, which occasion variety of receptions and of gifts; and he useth to give every thing that to which he hath brought it into the next capacity and disposition.

And therefore, in general, we may conclude that we feel not God's love shed abroad upon the heart, because the

heart is undisposed, and is not in the next disposition there-to ; and abused free-will hath been the cause of that. That we have grace, is to be ascribed to God : that we are without it, is to be ascribed to ourselves.

1. Heinous guilt of former sin may keep a soul much without the delights of divine love ; and the heinousness is not only in the greatness of the evil done materially, but oft in our long and wilful committing of smaller sins against knowledge, and conscience, and consideration. The Spirit thus grieved by hardened hearts, and wilful repulses, is not quickly and easily a Comforter to such a soul ; and when the sinner doth repent, it leaveth him more in uncertainty of his sincerity when he thinks, “ I do but repent, purpose, and promise now ; and so I oft did, and yet returned the next temptation to my sin : and how can I tell that my heart is not the same, and I should sin again if I had the same temptations ? ” O what doubts and perplexities doth oft wilful sinning prepare for !

2. And sins of omission have here a great part. The sweetness of God's love is a reward which slothful servants are unmeet for. It follows a “ Well done, good and faithful servant.” There is needful a close attendance upon God, and devotedness to him, and improvement of gospel grace, and revelation, to make a soul fit for amicable, sweet communion with God ; all that will save a soul from hell will not do this.

He that will taste these divine love tokens must, 1. Be no stranger to holy meditation and prayer, nor unconstant, cold, and cursory in them : but must dwell and walk above with God. 2. And he must be wholly addicted to improve his Master's talents in the world, and make it his design and trade on earth to do all the good in the world he can ; and to keep his soul clean from the flesh, and worldly vanity. And to such a soul God will make known his love.

3. And alas ! how ordinarily doth some carnal affection corrupt the appetite of the soul ; when we grow too much in love with men's esteem, or with earthly riches, or when our throats or fancies can master us into obedience, or vain

desires of meat, drink, recreation, dwelling, &c., the soul loseth its appetite to things divine; and nothing relisheth where appetite is gone or sick. We cannot serve God and Mammon, and we cannot at once taste much pleasure both in God and Mammon. The old, austere Christians found the mortification of the fleshly lusts a great advantage to the soul's delight in God.

4. And many errors about God's nature and works much hinder us from feasting on his love.

5. And especially the slight and ignorant thoughts of Christ, and the wondrous workings of God's love in him.

6. And especially if our belief itself once shake, or be not well and firmly founded.

7. And our slight thoughts of the office and work of the Holy Ghost on souls, and our necessity of it, and our not begging and waiting for the Spirit's special help.

8. And lastly, our unfaithful forgetfulness of manifold experiences and testimonies of his love, which should still be as fresh before us.

Alas! my soul, thou feelest thy defect, and knowest the hinderance, but what hope is there of remedy? Will God ever raise so low, so dull, so guilty a heart, to such a foretaste of glory, as is this effusion of his love by the Holy Ghost? The lightsome days in spring and summer, when the sun reviveth the late naked earth, and clothes it with delectable beauties, differs not more from night and winter, than a soul thus revived with the love of God doth differ from an unbelieving, formal soul.

Though this great change be above my power, the Spirit of God is not impotent, backward, barren, or inexorable. He hath appointed us means for so high a state; and he appointeth no means in vain. Were my own heart obedient to my commands, all these following I would lay upon it; yea, I will do it, and beg the help of God.

I. I charge thee, think not of God's goodness and love, as unproportionable to his greatness and his knowledge; nor overlook, in the whole frame of heaven and earth, the manifestation of one any more than of the other.

II. Therefore let not the wickedness and misery of the world tempt thee to think basely of all God's mercies to the world ; nor the peculiar privileges of the churches draw thee to deny or condemn God's common mercies unto all.

III. I charge thee to make the study of Christ, and the great work of man's redemption by him, thy chiefest learning, and most serious and constant work ; and in that wonderful glass to see the face of divine love, and to hear what is said of it by the Son from heaven ; and to come boldly, as reconciled to God by him.

IV. O see that thy repentance for former sins against knowledge and conscience, and the motions of God's Spirit, be sound, and thoroughly lamented and abhorred, how small soever the matter was in itself ; that so the doubt of thy sincerity keep not up doubts of God's acceptance.

V. Let thy dependence on the Holy Ghost, as given from Christ, be henceforth as serious and constant to thee as is the dependence of the eye on the light of the sun, and of natural life upon its heat and motion. Beg hard for the Holy Spirit, and gladly entertain it.

VI. Oh, never forget the many and great experiences thou hast had, these almost sixty years observed, of marvellous favour and providence of God, for soul and body, in every time, place, condition, relation, company, or change, thou hast been in. Lose not all these love tokens of thy Father, while thou art begging more.

VII. Hearken not too much to pained flesh, and look not too much into the grave ; but look out at thy prison windows to the Jerusalem above, and the heavenly society that triumph in glory.

VIII. Let all thy sure notices of a future life, and of the communion we have here with those above, draw thee to think that the great number of holy souls that are gone before thee, must needs be better than they were here ; and that they had the same mind, and heart, and way ; the same Saviour, Sanctifier, and promise, that thou hast ; and therefore they are as pledges of felicity to thee. Thou hast joyfully lived with many of them here ; and is it not better

to be with them there? It is only the state of glory foreseen by faith, which most fully sheweth us the greatness of God's love.

IX. Exercise thyself in psalms o praise, and daily magnify the love of God, that the due mention of it may warm and raise thy love to him.

X. Receive all temptations against divine love with hatred and repulse; especially temptations to unbelief; and as thou wouldest abhor a temptation to murder, or perjury, or any other heinous sin, as much abhor all temptations which would hide God's goodness, or represent him to thee as an enemy, or unlovely.

Thus God hath set the glass before us, in which we may see his amiable face. But alas! souls in flesh are in great obscurity, and, conscious of their own weakness, are still distrustful of themselves, and doubt of all their apprehensions, till overpowering objects and influences satisfy and fix them. For this my soul with daily longings doth seek to thee, my God and Father: O pardon the sin that forfeits grace: I am ready to say, "Draw nearer to me;" but it is meeter to say, "Open thou my eyes and heart, and remove all impediments, and undisposedness, that I may believe, and feel how near thou art, and hast been to me, while I perceived it not."

XIII. It is God's love shed abroad on the heart by the Holy Ghost which must make us "rejoice in hope of the glory of God:" this will do it, and without this it will not be done.

This would turn the fears of death into joyful hopes of future life. If my God will thus warm my heart with his love, it will have these following effects in this matter.

I. Love longeth for union, or nearness, and fruition; and it would make my soul long after God in glorious presence.

II. This would make it much easier to me to believe that there is certainly a future blessed life for souls; while I even tasted how God loveth them. It is no hard thing to believe that the sun will give light and heat, and revive the frozen earth: nor that a father will shew kindness to his

son, or give him an inheritance. Why should it be hard to believe that God will glorify the souls whom he loveth, and that he will take them near himself; and that thus it shall be done to those whom he delights to honour?

III. This effusion of divine love would answer my doubts of the pardon of sin: I should not find it hard to believe that love itself, which hath given us a Saviour, will forgive a soul that truly repenteth, and hates his sin, and giveth up himself to Christ for justification. It is hard to believe that a tyrant will forgive, but not that a father will pardon a returning prodigal son.

IV. This effusion of divine love will answer my fears, which arise from mere weakness of grace and duty: indeed, it will give no other comfort to an unconverted soul, but that he may be accepted if he come to God by Christ, with true faith and repentance; and that this is possible. But it should be easy to believe, that a tender father will not kill or cast out a child for weakness, crying, or uncleanness. Divine love will accept and cherish even weak faith, weak prayer, and weak obedience and patience, which are sincere.

V. This effused love would confute temptations that are drawn from thy afflictions; and make thee believe that they are not so bad as flesh representeth them: it would understand that every son that God loveth he chasteneth, that he may not be condemned with the world, and that he may be partaker of his holiness, and the end may be the quiet fruit of righteousness; it would teach us to believe that God in very faithfulness doth afflict us; and that it is a good sign that the God of love intendeth a better life for his beloved, when he trieth them with so many tribulations here: and though Lazarus be not saved for his suffering, it signified that God, who loved him, had a life of comfort for him, when he had his evil things on earth. When pangs are greatest, the birth is nearest.

VI. Were love thus shed on the heart by the Holy Ghost, it would give me a livelier apprehension of the state of blessedness which all the faithful now enjoy: I should delightfully think of them as living in the joyful love of God,

and ever fully replenished therewith. It pleaseth us to see the earth flourish in the spring ; and to see how pleasantly the lambs, and other young things, will skip and play : much more to see societies of holy Christians loving each other, and provoking one another to delight in God. O then what a pleasant thought should it be, to think how all our deceased godly friends, and all that have so died since the creation, are now together in a world of divine, perfect love ! How they are all continually wrapped up in the love of God, and live in the delight of perfect love to one another !

O my soul, when thou art with them, thou wilt dwell in love, and feast on love, and rest in love ; for thou wilt more fully dwell in God, and God in thee : and thou wilt dwell with none but perfect lovers : they would not silence thee from praising God in their assembly : tyrants, malignants, and persecutors, are more strange there (or far from thence) than toads, and snakes, and crocodiles, are from the bed or bedchamber of the king. Love is the air, the region, the world, they live in : love is their nature, their pulse, their breath, their constitution, their complexion and their work : it is their life, and even themselves and all. Full loth would one of those spirits be to dwell again among blind Sodomites, and mad, self-damning malignants upon earth.

VII. Yea this effused love will teach us to gather the glory of the blessed from the common mercies of this life : doth God give his distracted, malignant enemies, health, wealth, plenty pleasure, yea, lordships, dominions, crowns, and kingdoms ; and hath he not much better for beloved holy souls ?

Yea, doth he give the brutes life, sense, delight, and beauty ; and hath he not better things for men—for saints ?

There are some so blind as to think that man shall have no better hereafter, because brutes have not, but perish. But they know not how erroneously they think. The sensible souls of brutes are substance, and therefore are not annihilated at death : but God put them under us, and made them for us, and us more nearly for himself. Brutes

have not faculties to know and love God, to meditate on him, or praise him, or by moral agency to obey his precepts: they desire not any higher felicity than they have: God will have us use their service, yea, their lives and flesh, to tell us they were made for us. He tells us not what he doth with them after death: but whatever it is, it is not annihilation, and it is like they are in a state still of service unto man: whether united, or how individuate, we know not: nor yet whether those philosophers are in the right, that think that this earth is but a small image of the vast superior regions, where there are kingdoms answerable to these here, where the spirits of brutes are in the like subjection in aërial bodies, to those low, rational spirits that inhabit the aërial regions, as in flesh they were to man in flesh. But it is enough for us that God hath given us faculties to know, love, praise, and obey him, and trust him for glory, which he never gave to them, because they were not made for things so high. Every creature's faculties are suited to their use and ends.

And love tells me, that the blessed God, who giveth to brutes that life, health, and pleasure, which they are made and fitted for, will give his servants that heavenly delight in the fulness of his love and praise, and mutual, joyful love to one another, which nature fundamentally, and grace more immediately, hath made them fit for.

Blessed Jehovah! for what tastes of this effused love thou hast given me, my soul doth bless thee, with some degree of gratitude and joy: and for those further measures which I want, and long for, and which my pained, languid state much needs, and would raise my joyful hopes of glory, I wait, I beg from day to day. O give me now, at the door of heaven, some fuller taste of the heavenly felicity: shed more abroad upon my heart, by the Holy Ghost, that love of thine which will draw up my longing soul to thee, rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God.

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